

**INSIDE REDUCTIVE ABSTRACTION (still): sensation, visual  
perception and the aesthetic experience of the object**

Anne Mestitz BFA (Hons) MFA

Submitted in the fulfillment of the requirements for the Doctorate of  
Philosophy (Fine Arts) by Research at the University of Tasmania

February 2011

**Signed statement of originality**

This thesis contains no material, which has been accepted, for a degree or diploma by the University or any other institution. To the best of my knowledge and belief, it incorporates no material previously published or written by another person except where due acknowledgement is made in the text.

Anne Mestitz

**Signed statement of authority of access to copying**

This thesis may be made available for loan and limited copying in accordance with the Copyright Act 1968.

Anne Mestitz

## **Acknowledgements**

I wish to acknowledge with gratitude the excellent support and progressive structure offered by the Research Higher Degrees Program at the University of Tasmania.

I am indebted to my Supervisors Paul Zika and Jonathan Holmes for their constant support, professionalism and for miraculously keeping me focused.

I wish to acknowledge the expert assistance and friendship of Phil Blacklow, Stuart Houghton and Fred Fisher.

I wish to thank Marcelo Stamm for our brief but weighty conversations on the nature of colour and the role of the perceiver.

I wish to thank Hugh, Toby and Oliver (proof-reader) for coping and helping and being my family.

## **To Oliver**

“The kingdom of art commences where the air feels lighter and things, free from formal fetters, begin to cut whimsical capers.”

José Ortega Y Gasset. (1925)

## **Contents**

<b>ABSTRACT</b>	<b>6</b>
 <b>PART 1</b>	
1.1 Introduction	8
1.2 Swatch Australia	19
1.3 Colouring-out	21
 <b>PART 2</b>	
2.1 Introduction	23
2.2 Delivery	23
2.3 Ballistic Voices	28
2.4 OMG	32
2.5 Cosmic Solver Red 1278	41
2.6 Tilted Constant	46
2.7 Tune	50
2.8 Interference Field	53
2.9 All that I am	62
2.10 Notwithstanding Then	68
2.11 Overview	71
 <b>PART 3</b>	
3.1 Conclusion	76
3.2 What Next?	79
 <b>APPENDICES</b>	
1. Works Cited	80
2. Other References of Interest	83
3. List of Illustrations	87
4. Works Exhibited	88

## ABSTRACT

In the late 1950's, Latin America witnessed the advent of Neo-concretism and, in North America, Minimalism. Both movements were driven by the need to liberate painting into actual space, to make the painting an *object*. The same need lies at the heart of my work, which throughout this project enables a re-thinking of Reductive Abstraction. Whilst retaining the formal elements of Reductive Abstraction (within the syntax of objects) – colour, form, line and geometric shapes – my aim is to expose the apprehension of this body of work as being expressive of something subjectively intuited in the making process. This process begins with the manipulation of simple things such as mount card, match-sticks and paint in a state of reverie. Shapes are cut and glued and folded and assembled into models for contemplation. From these models, questions arise which determine whether I proceed with a larger-scale object.

This project does not comprise a set task – to make reductive art and write about it – but rather, it is a process of becoming: both to the senses and, ultimately, to a deeper kind of understanding. It is a process realized through the making of art in the studio and the exploration of a series of research questions posited throughout the time of its making. A project, therefore, that aims to examine the process of *doing* within the studio and, through this *doing*, extrapolate some answers – and, hopefully, more questions.

My research serves primarily as an investigation into the manipulation of colour and, in some instances, an attempt to give primacy to the cognizance of colour. In doing so, I seek to enact a kind of colouring-out: an irrational, unconstrained use of colour. Such work argues for the possibility of an immaterial becoming or thickness of colour which, through its transformative nature, defies surface and pervades space. By animating the object, particularly through colour spatialization and the relative positioning of objects in space, can the object create a sensate experience? I argue for an *affective object*: one whose correspondence with the perceiver is through sensation, thereby provoking a conflicted gaze of possibilities which both confounds the object and sets up a state of uncertainty.

I acknowledge, and argue the relevance of, the choice of the gallery as a site for the exhibition of Reductive Abstraction. This is a body of work made specifically in a research-based setting; that which is both historically encoded and seeking a new state of presentness. What *expectation* is considered by using the gallery as a frame for work that, in turn, utilizes the gallery as a *particular* space? I consider here a *fusion*, or site-space, rather than a relevant positing of a site-specific work *within* a gallery-specific space.

The exegesis demonstrates a foremost interest in Aesthetic theory, including the writings of Immanuel Kant, Henri Bergson, Willhelm Worringer, Arthur Danto and Andrew Benjamin; coupled with close examination of the artists and theorists engaged within Minimalism and Neo-concretism such as Anne Truitt, Peter Cripps, Helio Oiticica, Robert Morris, Rosalind Krauss, Feriera Gullar, Donald Kuspit and Frances Colpitt. There is also reference to artists such as Piet Mondrian, Anish Kapoor and Robert Mangold.

The crux of this research project lies in the reconfiguration of Reductive Abstraction; that which is hinged on the concepts of rationality, propositions, objectivity and pragmatism. The works – utilizing the syntax of Reductive Abstraction – dictate paradoxical outcomes whereby they are not only self-referential and reductive, but expressive through sensation. The engagement with concepts of irrationality, subjectivity, intuition and uncertainty is therefore an engagement with what lies beyond the object in itself.

## PART 1

### 1.1 Introduction

Reductive Abstraction is the language of non-figurative art, non-representational art, hard-edge geometric art, non-objective art and concrete art. In the late 1950's, Latin America witnessed the advent of Neo-concretism and, in North America, that of Minimalism. Whilst retaining their formalist roots both movements set out to create new and special objects which were an emergent form of painting and sculpture. In Brazil, the Neo-concrete artists imbued their foundations of Concrete Art with a sensibility and expression which invited participation by the viewer. The Minimalists, rather than focussing on the expression of a feeling, strove to liberate painting into actual space, to make the painting an *object* and in some instances to serialize the objects. Neo-concrete Art and Minimalism were strongly influenced by the European tradition at that time – in particular French Neo-plasticism and Russian Constructivism. Both were cognisant of the theory of phenomenology put forward by Maurice Merleau-Ponty and the writings of Susanne Langer (a philosopher based in New York). The work of the Cubists, Mondrian and Malevich influenced, and were cited, in the theories put forward by the Neo-concrete art group. The common denominator of these movements was the spatial engagement of the objects whereby the viewers body is implicated in either the handling the object, the durational apprehension of the object in space and the subsequent perception of the object as a whole. In this way, the term Reductive Abstraction has become entangled in the movements of Neo-concretism and Minimalism rather than that of Abstract Expressionism ( for example, the work of Anne Truitt as opposed to the work of Jackson Pollock).

The crux of this research project lies in the complex conundrum of re-configuring the nature of Reductive Abstraction; that which is hinged on the concepts of rationality, propositions, objectivity and pragmatism. Whilst retaining the formal elements of Reductive Abstraction (within the syntax of objects) – colour, form, line and geometric shapes – my aim is to expose the apprehension of this body



of work as being expressive of something subjectively intuited in the making process.

Can these works question the orthodoxies of Reductive Abstraction? Is it possible to reconfigure Reductive Abstraction in another visual language? There is a difference between repeating the language of Reductive Abstraction and reconfiguring that language in new ways. I seek to remain within Reductive Abstraction (still) yet, through the dialogue of the process of realization with the work, make possible a sense of its presentness or “embodied meaning” in contemporary culture.

Arthur Danto, in his essay ‘Embodied Meanings as Aesthetical Ideas’, writes of his “effort to break away from the Kant-Greenberg aesthetic of form, and instead develop an aesthetics of meaning,”<sup>1</sup> whereby he calls works of art “*embodied meanings*.”<sup>2</sup> This aesthetic discourse assists in the search for meaning of Reductive Abstraction by claiming that “art is about something and hence possesses meaning...art work embodies its meaning, which is what art criticism addresses.”<sup>3</sup> The aesthetic qualities which, in the current age of pluralism may be antithetical to taste, are “internal to the meaning of works of art construed as embodied meanings.”<sup>4</sup> Danto espouses Kant’s description of the *spirit* as a presentation of aesthetical ideas, defining it instead as “an idea that has been given sensory embodiment ... something that is both given to sense *and* intellect – where we grasp meaning through the senses, rather than a color or a taste or a sound.”<sup>5</sup>

The exploration of colour as part of the being of objects is fascinating; particularly if, in light of Danto’s theory, we consider the *aesthetical idea* as being “merely one meaning given through another, as in irony

---

<sup>1</sup> Danto, Arthur C. ‘Embodied Meanings as Aesthetical Ideas’ cited in *Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism*. Winter 2007, p126. Viewed 7 July 2010, <[http://www.sztaki.hu/providers/eper/articles/embodied\\_meanings.html](http://www.sztaki.hu/providers/eper/articles/embodied_meanings.html)>

<sup>2</sup> Ibid. p126

<sup>3</sup> Ibid. p125

<sup>4</sup> Ibid. p127

<sup>5</sup> Ibid. p127

or in metaphor.”<sup>6</sup> For example, does colour contain latent meaning manifest at the time of apprehension? If so, does this meaning challenge the objective nature of Reductive Abstraction? Is it possible to consider colour both the subject and the object? Colour is, as Stephen Melville states, in most instances both “subjective and objective, physically fixed and culturally constructed, absolutely proper and endlessly misplaced ... [it] can appear as an unthinkable scandal.”<sup>7</sup>

At the start of this project there was a desire to work out the thought and action inside Reductive Abstraction. “Inside Reductive Abstraction” alludes to an introspective as well as external examination of the notion in art: *to be abstract*. Firstly it is important to point out the nature of the project itself, just as one would discuss the nature of a work of art. This project does not comprise a set task – to make reductive art and write about it – but rather, it is a process of *becoming*: both to the senses and, ultimately, to a deeper kind of understanding. This notion of becoming engages philosophically with the *potential* of the works to come into being in an emergent way through process, intuition and experimentation. It is a process realized through the making of art work in the studio and the exploration of a series of research questions posited throughout the time of making. A project therefore that aims to examine the process of *doing* within the studio, and through this *doing* extrapolate some answers – and more questions. By discussing the process of thought engaged in the making of reductive abstract art, I seek to offer some insight into its historical and emotional structure, evolving from a kind of reverie and experience. It is precisely in the abstract nature of the work that this experience is offered, allowing a glimpse of something beyond the self-reflexive object.

I started by placing a T-shaped structure on the studio wall. A line drawing was then added, using the face of the wall as a vertical plane.

---

<sup>6</sup> Ibid. p127

<sup>7</sup> Melville, Stephen. ‘Colour has yet to be named’ (1993) cited in *Colour: Documents of Contemporary Art*. (Edited by David Batchelor). Whitechapel and MIT Press: London and USA 2008, p194

The structure was now a cross-like form. This form was only perceptible as a whole by standing in a particular spot, marking the position of a single-perspective viewpoint. I placed an orange vinyl dot (about the size of a jam lid) on the floor to mark this spot. Because I felt unsettled by the *meaning* or symbolism of the cross-shape, I decided to discard it as a potential module for exploration. I instead became fascinated by the orange dot. Its place on the floor seemed incongruous and incomplete. Over a number of days, I placed another, then another until five dots in total hovered over the grey-painted rectilinear format of the studio floor. Essentially, this small experiment was conceptually tuning the idea of a particular syntax employed by Reductive Abstractionists – geometric forms, colour and composition arranged in a particular tacit way in a certain place. With the addition of each dot, the others gained more significance – somewhat analogous to musical notation – yet remained illogical and disparate. This punctuation was enhanced by the *energy* of the colour orange.

I felt the urge at this stage to apply a proposition. The viewer was cued into standing on the orange dots by way of an obscure sign, reading *Stand on the Orange Dots* in Electronic Font, with an orange dot below. Although an abstract-type font and therefore incomprehensible, the graphic design of the sign suggested a kind of symbolism that was wholly indeterminate. I began working with black vinyl tape on another project and decided spontaneously to apply a stripe of tape across the near centre of the dot grouping. This had an immediate effect: the dots and the floor became an activated space. The black stripe acted as a compositional *act of answering* to the dots. The negotiation and passage of the viewer through this intervention on the floor had a temporal quality. To see the work, the viewer's gaze was cast down towards the floor and its perception altered as they passed through the space. The overriding sense was one of cohesion, as the orange dots and the stripes and the space all related to each other in a visually unified way.



Figure 1: Studio (May 2008)

The orange dot intervention, despite its simplicity, placed the subject (myself) in a site (the studio) of habitation and was, in an elemental way, a working through the process and manner of Reductive Abstraction within installation. *Stand on the Orange Dots* is not considered an artwork, but rather a furnishing of the studio and a trigger to my mind towards potential research questions.

What then, using this experiment as a starting point, is Reductive Abstraction? There is an inherent integrity in using particular geometric forms which, either singularly or in multiple, correspond to both the space in which they are situated and to the relationship between the work and the viewer within that space. Jung describes the process of intuition as one which “mediate[s] perceptions in an unconscious way”<sup>8</sup> and the placement of the forms and the motivation for the selection of various modules feel like random choices but are, in fact, all part of an intuitive process.

Colour energises forms and, when there is more than one form, sets up a motion in the space. *Stand on the Orange Dots* is framed by the floor area, not as a painting on the wall. This project seeks to investigate objects which, by the nature of their three-dimensionality, posit a

---

<sup>8</sup> Jung, C.G. *Psychological Types*. Routledge & Kegan Paul Ltd: London 1923, p452

different perspective of viewing and apprehension within the chosen site of the gallery.

The installation of work in a gallery (for example, *OMG* in the Entrepot Gallery) is another component examined within this project.

Installation is a fundamental tool and, as Rosalind Krauss articulates, “folds the actual space of the gallery or museum into the matrix of the assembled object such that, as the stage on which the object appears, it becomes essential to the object’s very existence.”<sup>9</sup> Several of the works undertaken during this project were considered for a particular site and thereby site-referenced to activate that particular site. There is a need to acknowledge the choice of the gallery as a site for exhibition of these works, made specifically in a research-based setting. This is a concept perhaps best explained using the following example: imagine that I chose to situate the work *outside* of the gallery; viewed as part of the framework of the everyday. In comparison to Krauss’s description of installation within the gallery, think of the art object as one folded in to the environment of the everyday, so much so that it actually *becomes* that environment. Only then can we understand that to be in a gallery is to be a part of “the gallery” as an institution for the viewing of art.

The Neoconcrete Art movement (1959-1961) is a starting point for the contextualization of the works in this research. Helio Oiticica, a major artist and exponent of the movement, passionately takes up the notion of art becoming *an environment* and part of the fabric (quite literally, as is the case with *Parangoles*<sup>10</sup>) of the everyday outside the institution. In order to do so, Oiticica turns his sensory experiments into performance and installation. My project will be examining the nature of his earlier work undertaken within the gallery context rather than the later performative works. The gallery as a site for exhibition of my works is integral to the understanding of their meaning. As Ad Reinhardt

---

<sup>9</sup> Krauss, R.E. *Perpetual Inventory*. An October Book. The MIT Press: London and USA 2010, p48-49

<sup>10</sup> Parangoles were wearable brightly coloured fabric constructions using various materials such as acetate, cotton, cords and newspaper. Oiticica’s intention was to symbolically energize life with art and art with life.

states, “art is art-as-art and everything else is everything else...the one meaning in art-as-art, past or present, is art meaning.”<sup>11</sup>

This statement by Reinhardt is critical in elucidating why I chose the particular artists discussed within this exegesis. Artists such as Helio Oiticaca, Piet Mondrian, Robert Morris and Anne Truitt amongst others produced work that exemplified junctures in the changing nature of art in such a way that the work – being art about art - presaged experimentation and reconfiguration of the semantics and concerns of art to come. The artists chosen specifically provided a platform on which it is possible to formulate an argument for what the studio works seek to attain – a reconfiguration of Reductive Abstraction to reflect the present. The present is not rational, it is not certain and it is not static. The present is irrational, uncertain and in a state of flux. The art works that I create come directly from collected random thoughts and actions. These thoughts and actions consist of sporadic piecing together of cut or drawn objects and deep inspections of colour variants. Underpinning these intuitive actions there is a conscious framework or aesthetic sensibility which leans towards Reductive Abstraction and the urge to separate myself from the depiction of the ‘real’ and create what is ‘actual’ and expressive of whatever condition consumes me at the time. There is – as Susanne Langer describes in relation to *semblance* - a “disengagement from belief – the contemplation of sensory qualities without their usual meanings”<sup>12</sup> allowing an object with no particular significance the primacy of appearance.

It is important to make the distinction between my drive towards abstraction – a form of expression that addresses the noun *to be abstract* as a particular way of perceiving the world – and the verb *to draw away from*. Ferreira Gullar, a poet and writer for the Neo-concrete movement in Brazil, succinctly articulates my intentions with his description of a *non-object* as “a special object through which a

---

<sup>11</sup> Farrow, Clare (Editor). *A Reinhardt, J Kosuth, F Gonzalez-Torres: Symptoms of Interference, Conditions of Possibility*. Art & Design Profile No 34. Academy Group Ltd: UK 1994, p21

<sup>12</sup> Langer, Susanne K. *Feeling and Form: A Theory of Art developed from Philosophy in a New Key*. Charles Scribner’s Sons: New York 1953, p49

synthesis of sensorial and mental experiences is intended to take place.”<sup>13</sup> The special object is not a differentiation from a concrete object but rather an abstract “thing in itself.”<sup>14</sup>

The object within a painting is a representation of an object. This representation of an object is depicted in an illusionistic space. The format or surface of the support (canvas/paper/board etc) is where the imagination of the artist projects an image of some thing which, in turn, becomes representational of that thing. The format or surface of that thing is held – whether in actuality or through the suggestion of an outlined shape – by a frame which is “the mediator between fiction and reality, a bridge and barrier, protecting the picture, the fictitious space, while also facilitating its communication with the external, real, space.”<sup>15</sup>

Conversely, the object of sculpture is an actual object which is present in a three-dimensional form. This present object occupies actual space. I use the word *actual* intentionally as this derives from the word *active*, implying a state of existence at this particular moment in time or, in other words, something that is real or present. The object can be seen to be autonomous and the space it occupies real, as opposed to an imagined or fictitious space. When the art object is placed within a gallery setting, this site becomes yet another framing: the voluminous empty negative space of the room in which the object is placed. This placement in a delineated space is not unlike the placement of a representation of something within a painting frame. It is at this point that I consider the art object a figure. The object can be said to be both present/actual/real and to represent something else, that which is not visible but felt.

---

<sup>13</sup> Gullar, Ferreira. ‘Theory of the Non-Object’ cited in ‘Neoconcretism and Minimalism: On Ferreira Gullar’s Theory of the Non-Object’ by Michael Ashbury. *Cosmopolitan Modernisms*(Edited by Kobena Mercer) InIVA and MIT Press: London 2005, p170

<sup>14</sup> Worringer, Willhelm. ‘Abstraction and Empathy’ cited in *Art in Theory 1900-2000: An Anthology of Changing Ideas* (New Edition). (Edited by Charles Harrison and Paul Wood). Blackwell Publishing: USA 2003, p69

<sup>15</sup> Ibid. p171

Some sculptural objects can be considered to be grounded by their inertia or mass, always succumbing to gravitational force. This is often enhanced by the placement of objects on plinths or bases. Commonly used as a means of support, these bases suggested that the mass of the object was such that it required a further object to secure its position as one eternally bound and subject to weight.

In her discussion of reductionism, Frances Colpitt describes it as having “two different senses...one sees modernism as historically reductive by contrasting new work with old, [while] the other attributes reductive intentions to the Minimalists.”<sup>16</sup> I see modernism as an opening-out or continuum which is constantly reinventing itself and refining its language in many ways. This ongoing movement of art from one form to several others is made clear by Theodor Adorno who states: “True art challenges its own essence... [And] is a historically changing constellation of moments.”<sup>17</sup> Colpitt’s intentional reduction is the artist’s deliberate abstraction or simplification to the essence of an object as a thing-in-itself, or what Donald Judd, an artist and writer of the North American Minimalist tradition, calls *a specific object*: one that is “neither painting nor sculpture.”<sup>18</sup> The work undertaken in the studio is not an act of deliberate reduction or drawing-out from something in reality, but rather the utilization of simple forms or tropes to serve a purpose. Although pertaining to reductive objects, the ultimate purpose of Reductive Abstraction, for me, is the creation of art as a means of communication.

Does affect constitute representation? If the Reductive Abstraction I am engaging with is a form of expression that builds on previous conceptions, does it represent expression as a figure or sign of something? Abstract forms are figures, in that they seem to be in constant relation to something else; whether it be the space that they

---

<sup>16</sup> Colpitt, Frances. *Minimal Art: The Critical Perspective*. UMI Research Press: USA 1990, p115

<sup>17</sup> Adorno, Theodor. ‘Aesthetic Theory’ cited in *Aesthetics: A Comprehensive Anthology*. (Edited by Steven M. Cahn and Aarom Meskin). Blackwell Publishing: UK 2008, p359

<sup>18</sup> Judd, Donald. ‘Specific Objects’ cited in *Art in Theory 1900-2000: An Anthology of Changing Ideas* (New Edition). (Edited by Charles Harrison and Paul Wood). Blackwell Publishing: USA 2003, p824



occupy or the space of the viewer (literally and cognitively). Reductive art is said to be non-representative and non-figurative, and yet these “non-mimetic shapes...reflect human experience by pure visual expression and spatial relations.”<sup>19</sup> I cannot imagine a work of Reductive Abstraction that fails to represent something, even if it is simply the sensation or thingness of what is before the viewer. David Batchelor concisely addresses the issue of representation and abstraction by stating:

It may be argued that a Mondrian or a Rothko or Le Witt is an image of something, but not an image of some thing. It seems safer to think of the work as representing, or attempting to express, a kind of conception or understanding of a world, to be like that world in an abstract way... it acquires its meaning by being placed in a relationship of difference with related antecedent works.<sup>20</sup>

Here again is the mention of historical predeterminancy in the modernist art object(s), whereby there is a need to elucidate further. In the course of this research investigation I will reflect upon and make reference to specific art works; not only as a deliberate effort to expand my knowledge on Reductive Abstraction, but also to conclude that “reduction does not yield certainty, but something like its opposite, which is ambiguity and multivalence.”<sup>21</sup>

The real object of the art object is in doubt. Objects are substantial. This substantiality is determined by the material, the weight, the scale, the volume, the mode of making and the ultimate form of the object. An object is palpable by the eye, touch and mind. The word ‘object’ comes from the Latin *objectum*, or “thing thrown before (the mind).”<sup>22</sup>

---

<sup>19</sup> Arnheim, Rudolf. *Art and Visual Perception: A Psychology of the Creative Eye* (New Edition). University of California Press: Berkley and Los Angeles 1974, p145

<sup>20</sup> Batchelor, David. ‘Abstraction, Modernism, Representation’ cited in *Thinking Art: Beyond Traditional Aesthetics* (Edited by Andrew Benjamin and Peter Osborne). Institute of Contemporary Arts: London 1991, p55

<sup>21</sup> Varnedoe, Kirk. *Pictures of Nothing*. Princeton University Press: Washington 2006, p56

<sup>22</sup> *The Shorter Oxford English Dictionary: On Historical Principles* (Third Edition). Clarendon Press: Oxford 1978

The aesthetic of an abstract object is, for me, an active attention to an abstract sensate experience which is internalized. To be an inanimate object implies a kind of inertia and leads to the question: how can I animate the object in order to create a sensate experience? What then becomes of the *real object*? There is a sense that the object-ness of the object is confounded during the course of its making.

I am drawn in particular to Donald Kuspit's essay, 'The Abstract Self-Object,' which discusses a certain type of abstract painting as offering "a rigorous disequilibrium, which affords a primitive recognition of our own inner disequilibrium."<sup>23</sup> Whereas Kuspit addresses a psychoanalytical response to Reductive Abstraction, Willhelm Worringer (1881-1965), a philosopher, expands the concept of disequilibrium by stating that the urge to abstraction is an effort to still anxiety through the use of cosmic geometry.<sup>24</sup> However, the suppression or stilling of anxiety through the use of geometry does not exclude or absent anxiety from the completed work. During the course of my research, I have found that the irony of effort can be reversed in such a way that the inherent anxiety of abstraction is then projected back upon the viewer.

To conclude, it will be revealed that the aesthetic experience of witnessing a work of Reductive Abstraction can be seen to be both perceptual and conceptual. This is a paradox that I have sought to challenge through the construction of objects for installation. The works will pursue such questions as: By animating the object – particularly through colour spatialization and the relative positioning of objects in space - can the object create a sensate and subjective experience?

*Swatch Australia*, discussed below and followed by a discussion on colour assists as further introduction to the thoughts and processes that led to particular relevant work in Part Two .

---

<sup>23</sup> Kuspit, Donald. 'The Abstract Self-Object' cited in *Abstract Art in the Late Twentieth Century*. (Edited by Frances Colpitt).Cambridge University Press: UK 2002, pp131-140

<sup>24</sup> Worringer, Willhelm. 'Abstraction and Empathy' cited in *Art in Theory 1900-2000: An Anthology of Changing Ideas* (New Edition). (Edited by Charles Harrison and Paul Wood). Blackwell Publishing: USA 2003

## 1.2 *Swatch Australia*

*Swatch Australia*<sup>25</sup> is a work in which nature is reduced to a simple manifestation of colour, taking the form of colour swatches displayed on a television screen. Although the kind of reduction that I wish to engage with in this research project is one that acts upon concepts or thoughts and feelings (as opposed to the distillation of literal things), several aspects of *Swatch Australia* set the stage for key components of the research to follow. As a small child, I used to press my face up to the black and white television screen and become mesmerized by the little organic squiggles that fizzed before my eyes. They had a trance-like effect and I would try to get as close as possible in the hope that the source of the pictures would reveal itself to me. *Swatch Australia* is an attempt to emulate this experience for a small child today. I deliberately chose 'Nature Australia,' a generic montage of wildlife images and scenes, as an artificial reflection of the experience of nature. With the DVD running, I pressed my camera lens flush to the screen and took a series of about 250 photographs. These were then manipulated into solid colour swatches and edited using movie-making software that flashed between each one at approximately 80 beats per minute, or slightly above resting heart rate. This prevented the viewer from being lulled into a trance-like state and, in fact, created an environment that was slightly agitated and unnerving.

One of the most important aspects of this work is the desire to experiment with the effects of monochromatic colour. Colour experimentation is central to this project, especially with consideration to paint. During the process of making *Swatch Australia*, I strove to push the subject of colour to express something beyond passive

---

<sup>25</sup> *Swatch Australia* is a work that was made for the show 'Geometric Nature' held at the Devonport Art Gallery in August 2008. This work is not part of the submission of works for exhibition, but rather a preliminary work which was integral to my process of working through issues related to the topic.

experience and to stimulate a response that is relentless and surprising in its visual agitation.

*Swatch Australia* utilized what I call a kind of *immaterial* colour and it is *material* colour which is the foundation of this research. Material colour engages form and is concrete. There is a relationship to its site of placement – as an object in that site – and, in this way, the viewer negotiates the space in relation to where the objects of colour are situated.

The use of immaterial colour had the potential to create a project based on sensory immersive environments with coloured light, which is not the aim of this project. This sort of colour is formless and ephemeral. The immaterial nature of coloured light has a nascent urge to pervade space and the site in which it is contained. Coloured light touches existing structures but it is not tangible like an object with the property of a particular colour. Paradoxically, often the coloured-light environment of the gallery is so thick with the immaterial substance of colour that the colour itself becomes almost tangible. My investigation includes a focus on the colour materiality of painted objects that have been rendered intangible.

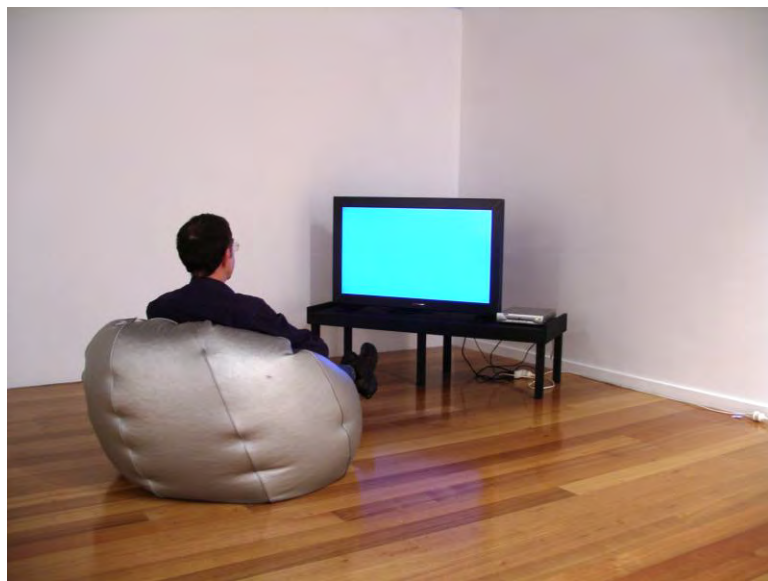


Figure 2: **Swatch Australia** 2008, Mixed media installation of variable dimensions

### 1.3 Colouring-out

Colouring-in is a common childhood pastime that establishes the boundedness of colour within a delineated frame or shape. To colour-in is to adhere to a two-dimensional format: an activity in which going “over the lines” implies a failure of control and an entering of a no-mans land where colour simply does not appear or exist.

A primary element of this research is to investigate the manipulation of colour and, in some instances, attempt to give primacy to the cognizance of colour. In doing so, I am seeking a colouring-out: an irrational unconstrained use of colour.

If I take a brown rock (an object from the natural world) and split it open, it will still be brown inside. Objectively seen, brown is a *passive* property inherent in the rock. It can be said that *this rock is brown* and will remain brown until something is deliberately added to it or a natural transformation takes place. However, if I take orange-coloured paint and apply it to an object, orange becomes that object’s *surface* colour; the materiality being the paint pigment within which it is carried as a property of that pigment. The orange paint appears subjectively and is an *active* additive property of the object. It can be said that *this object is orange* but I prefer to think of it as: *this object is orang-ing*<sup>26</sup>. Oranging, being a gerund of *doing* orange, activates the prehension of the colour orange and implies that the subsequent sensate experience is subjective and capable of arousing emotion. The rock can also be seen to be capable of *browning* in a sensate way, but I wish to clarify the deliberate action of the artist as one that determines *the appearance* of the art object. In painting, colour is manipulated in order to create an optical illusion of space. Conversely, in the history of sculpture, colour has been associated with surface appearance and hence a property of the sculptural object itself, denying colour the role of subject.

---

<sup>26</sup> This idea to use the word orange as the gerund *orang-ing* comes from the writing of Nicholas Humphrey in his book *Seeing Red: a study in consciousness*. The President and Fellows of Harvard College: USA 2006

There is a difference between the way we conceive the colour of an animate object, one that represents some *thing* which can be named, and that of an art object. The appearance of an unexpected colour on an animate object is susceptible to doubt. Consider the following analogy: during a football game you notice that a Caucasian player has a blue shoulder. This provokes the intuitive response that perhaps the player has suffered an injury and has therefore bruised his shoulder. Looking around the immediate vicinity of the field, you notice that the line markings on the field are blue. The appearance of a second blue – the blue of the line markings – is enough to create an element of doubt that undercuts the reasoning process of your initial deduction. It is now indeterminate whether the blueness of the footballer's shoulder is that of the line-markings or the result of a bruise. In the case of an art object – one that seeks to be abstract and to conceive colour beyond appearance – the same doubt does not apply since it is accepted that the artist has predetermined that the object will be a particular colour. The colour, in this instance, is both subject and object and has achieved a chromatic autonomy. Surprisingly, despite colour's primacy as syntax, it is not often the subject. During an interview in 2006, Daniel Buren ceded that "it is certainly curious to note that colour has mainly been banished from the field of art."<sup>27</sup> Colour is non-existent without form and yet there is a formless quality to its nature. Colour is a product of naming; an attribute given to all solids, liquids and gases. It is a sensation created by light reflecting off different forms and can therefore be subject to the vicissitudes of light. In order to be understood, it can only be spoken of in relation to other things. As soon as colour is seen only to lay upon a surface in order to be inaugurated into the general appearance of something *other*, "the subject will always kill colour and we will not notice it"<sup>28</sup>. This implies a kind of death, a flatness, a surrender to the stable. The colour I wish to saturate myself in is one that is not merely a property of an object,

---

<sup>26</sup> Batchelor, David (Editor). *Colour: Documents of Contemporary Art*. Whitechapel and MIT Press: London and USA 2008, p222

<sup>28</sup> Malevich, Kasimir. Cited in *Reflection on Color*. Cruz Diez. Fundacion Juan March: Madrid 2009, p157

but rather colour – as a material pigment – as the subject, relative to time and space.

## **PART 2**

### **2.1 Introduction**

The main body of the exegesis is covered in this section. I have chosen to examine each discreet work chronologically in order to reveal my making and thinking process in regards to how this project was pursued. Under each sub-heading titled by the name of the particular work; the description, process, other artists' work and theoretical context are discussed. In each of these discussions I will unfold the answer to how this research work reconfigures the language of Reductive Abstraction; thus positing it in a contemporary context.

### **2.2 *Delivery***

*Delivery*<sup>29</sup> is literally the transference of colour as a thing-in-itself from one place to another. The crates are varying sizes and colours and are placed in an upright position with the lids removed. The scale of the crates is such that each corresponds to the height the viewer, who is required to incline their head to peer inside. Upon looking into each crate the viewer is afforded a subjective response to each individual colour which is enhanced by the fact – due to multiple crates of colour being present – that comparisons can be made. As Yves Klein states:

Every nuance of colour is, in a sense, an individual, a living creature of the same species as the primary colour, but with the character and personal soul of its own. There are many nuances: gentle, angry, violent, sublime, vulgar, peaceful.<sup>30</sup>

This work asks the question “can colour be a spatially sculptural thing-in-itself?” By experimenting with commercial paints, I have realized

---

<sup>29</sup> *Delivery* is the first work completed for inclusion in the PhD exhibition of works.

<sup>30</sup> Klein, Yves. *Yves Klein*. The National Museum of Contemporary Art, Norway Series no 2 1997, p128

that the *thingness* of colour is made apparent when the paint is flat (matte) and luminous. The paint selected for the five crates was commercial paint from the Solver Paints range, including the colours *Ultramarine Blue*, *Rose Madder*, *Hansa Yellow*, *Fluorescent Green* and *Fluorescent Orange*. In order to present colour as a subject I chose the standard carrier of an artwork (the crate) to contain the colour which then was to be delivered to the gallery for exhibition. In this way, colour was delivered to the gallery as an object. I wanted to see how the reconfiguration of the support or format for the means of “carrying” colour alters the way it is perceived by the viewer. The fact that the crates are delivering colour to the gallery is of equal importance to the experience of each individual colour and *Delivery* served to demonstrate this notion.



Figure 3/4/5: **Delivery** 2008, wood and paint, variable dimensions



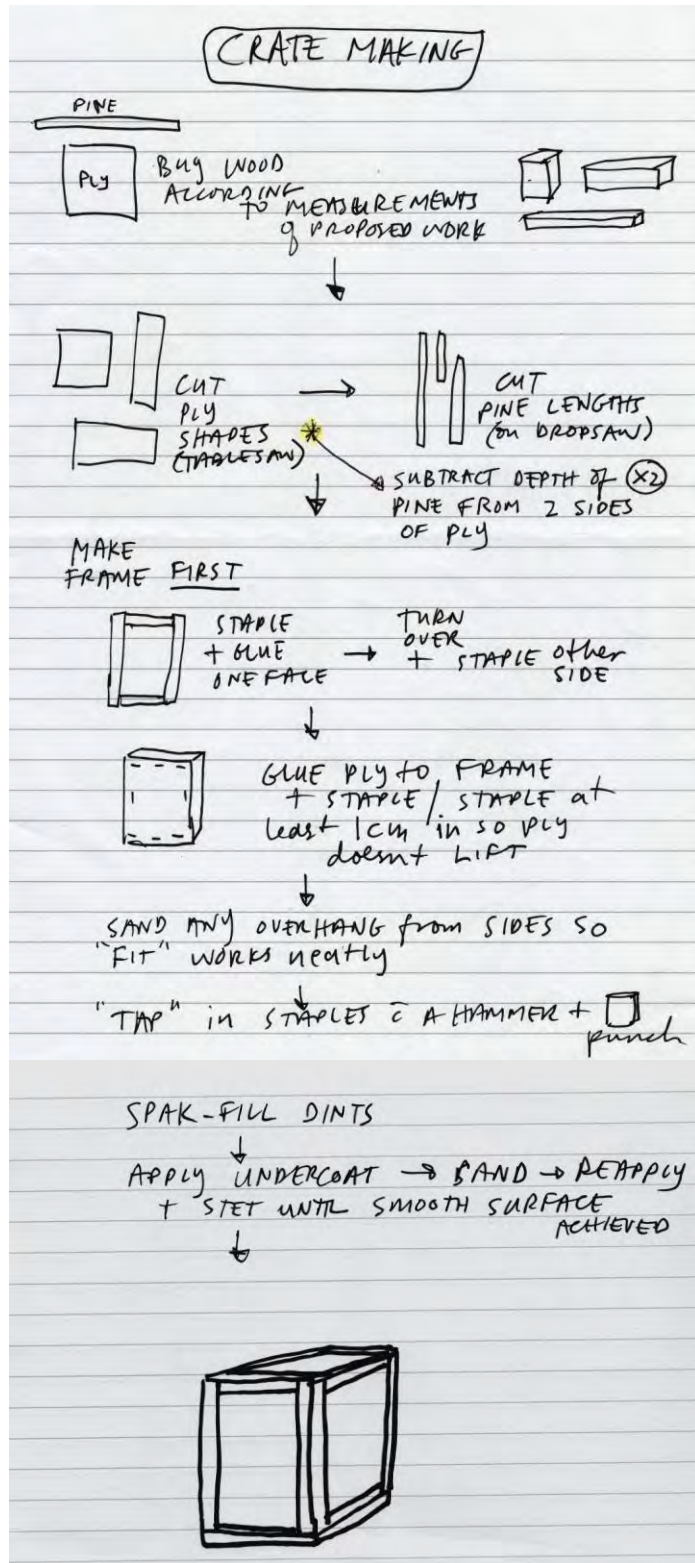


Figure 6: Crate making instructions to myself to prevent missing a step.

Clearly, there is an intention here to “unbind” the bounded notion of colour from the wall: to speak of colour as liberated from surface, as being a material subject in itself. Each colour has primacy and an intended autonomy.

Hélio Oiticica (1937-1980), the youngest member of the Neo-concrete movement, was an artist intensely interested in the structure of colour and the viewers’ haptic response to colour constructions. Oiticica writes of his work:

Structure rotates, then, in space, becoming itself also temporal: ‘structure time’. Structure and colour are inseparable here, as are time and space, and the fusion of these four elements, which I consider dimensions of a single phenomenon, comes about in the work.<sup>31</sup>

In the work *Box bolide 12*, one of many in a series, Oiticica disrupts the distinction between painting and sculpture in the creation of a sliding box construction containing raw pigment, earth, corrugated cardboard, mirror, glass and a fluorescent lamp. Oiticica imbues his fetish with colour in materials that are tactile and various in their textures, enticing the viewer to touch and experience the work to the extent that they are in the *environment* of colour<sup>32</sup>. The colours Oiticica uses are warm colours such as deep orange, ochre yellow and peach. The mirror acts as an internal self-reflexive device to emphasize and reveal the inside of the box, or what seems like the internal organs of a body-box; inviting further exploration of the materials. As Mário Pedrosa<sup>33</sup> states, the viewer “becomes attracted to an action” and “once there, [takes] part in a process of direct communication through gesture and action.”<sup>34</sup> In describing his own experience with *Box bolide 12*, Pedrosa

---

<sup>31</sup> Batchelor, David (Editor). *Colour: Documents of Contemporary Art*. Whitechapel and MIT Press: London and USA 2008, p126

<sup>32</sup> Pedrosa, Mário(Annotated translation by Michael Asbury 2004). ‘Environment Art, Postmodern Art: Helio Oiticica.’ Cited in *Open Systems: Rethinking Art c1970*. 1 June – 18 September 2005. Tate Publishing: London 2005, p182

<sup>33</sup> Mário Pedrosa, a writer and art critic, has written on his experience with the work of Oiticica and it is this act of handling and engaging with the work such as the Nuclei or Bolides (Boxes) that is integral to the understanding of the concepts he pursued.

<sup>34</sup> Ibid., Pedrosa. p182

further writes that the work's excessive colour saturation "[becomes] visible, one [can] feel its physical presence, reflect upon it, touch it, stand on it, breath it."<sup>35</sup>

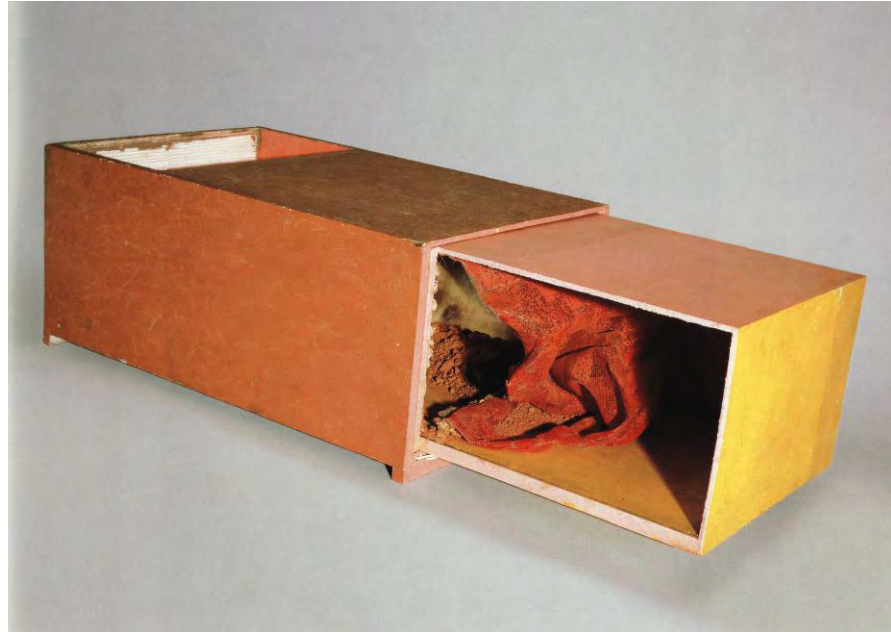


Figure 7: Hélio Oiticica **Box Bolide 12** 1964-1965, mixed media assemblage, 400mm x 1400mm x 500mm

Ferreira Gullar describes the convergence of painting and sculpture as being integral to the aims of Neo-concretism, resulting in "special objects – nonobjects – for which the denominations of *painting* and *sculpture* no longer apply."<sup>36</sup> Neo-concrete art is distinguished from the prevailing Concrete art, which Gullar believes is "influenced by a dangerously acute rationalism."<sup>37</sup> For him, the very same mechanical and mathematical theories of construction that characterised the Concrete movement also served to negate the expressive or affective potential of the art works it produced. Whereas Concretism relied on a rationalistic discourse in order to confirm its output as objective, the Neo-concretists were "against objectification and exteriorization ...

---

<sup>35</sup> Ibid. p182

<sup>36</sup> Gullar, Ferreira. 'Neo-concrete Manifesto' cited in *Geometric Abstraction: Latin American Art from the Patricia Phelps de Cisneros Collection*. Yve-Alain Bois, Paulo Herkenhoff, Ariel Jimenez, Luis, Mary Schneider Enrique. Yale University Press: New Haven and London 2001, p152

<sup>37</sup> Ibid. p152

[instead their work] opened toward an affective space and a more fluid and pliant relationship between inside and outside.”<sup>38</sup> The aim was not to advocate an alteration in the syntax of reductive non-figurative art, but rather to produce a *conception* of art as “something which amounts to more than the sum of its constituent elements;”<sup>39</sup> a new state of presentness in time and space, representative not of a formula, but a sensate experience of an indeterminate form.

### 2.3 Ballistic Voices

*Ballistic Voices* is not included in the final submission but, like *Swatch*, has had some valuable input into the direction of this research project.

The form of the cone is one that has fascinated me since the beginning of my research. I had previously been collecting various cone artefacts and had made some small forms based on the shape of a cone. I had also been playing with the literal materiality of paint by making (or allowing the making of) solid lumps of paint. I had an obsession with the beauty of being able to hold paint *and only paint* in the palm of my hand; with paint as a self-reflexive material that is both subject and object.

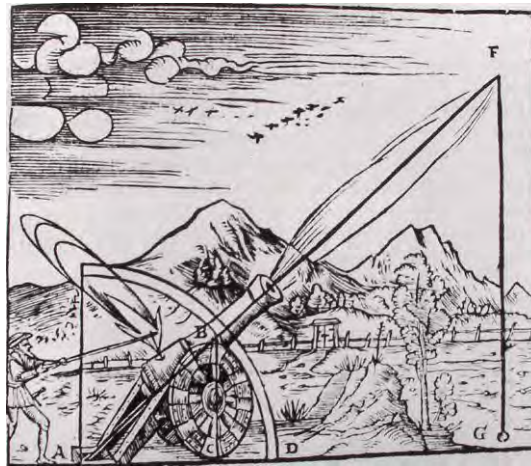


Figure 8: Daniel Santbech, *Problematum Astronomicorum* (Basel: 1561)

<sup>38</sup> Amor, Monica. ‘From Work to Frame, In Between, and Beyond: Lygia Clark and Hélio Oiticica, 1959-1964.’ *Grey Room*, Winter 2010, p21.  
<<http://www.mitpressjournals.org/toc/grey/-/38>>

<sup>39</sup> Ibid., Gullar, p154

I happened upon an image of Aristotle's 'Ballistic Theory'<sup>40</sup> - a drawing of a cannon accompanied by graphic line markings that described an object's desire to return to Earth. The poetic notion of an object with a desire and a will captured my imagination.

Months later, I was curated into a show with the premise and title 'Chance Encounters'. I immediately thought of connecting my feelings about the materiality of paint with the *potential* of the cone formation as a vehicle for its (colour) expulsion

The work consisted of two conical-shaped, large, mounted objects facing each other at either end of the gallery space. The floor space stretching between them had several randomly placed amorphous discs of coloured paint on the floor.



Figure 9: **Ballistic Voices** 2009 steel, MDF, paint, rubber (Installation Long Gallery Hobart)



Figure 10: Detail of conical contraption

---

<sup>40</sup> Robin, Harry: *The Scientific Image from Cave to Computer*, Harry N. Abrams Incorporated: New York 1992, p199





Figure 11: **Ballistic Voices** 2009 steel, MDF, paint, rubber (Installation SASA Gallery Adelaide)

*Ballistic Voices* invites the viewer to make the association between sound and coloured objects. The slang “to go ballistic” implies a burst of irrational anger and conjures the notion of voices shooting out into space and then falling to earth. In an abstracted way, the work is a representation of voices that have fallen transformed into silent synaesthetic discs of colour on the floor. It is an exploration of colour and its perceptual and transformative qualities: its synaesthetic ability, its ability to repel and attract, its material manifestations and its ability to trigger memory. The ballistic voices are spent. If we think of the voices as material colour, the black voids in the cone-shaped apparatus depict this state of depletion.

The coloured forms essentially made themselves. After making an initial colour choice and pouring paint onto sanded discs of MDF, I allowed the paint to settle into its own formation. The self-regulating process of the paint moving of its own accord encouraged me, as the artist, to make a value judgement. It took some time to accept that what I saw as ugly imperfections were, in fact, relevant to the intention and reading of the work. The colours repel and attract as objects. Each individual disc promotes an aesthetic response that is

both subjective and instinctual, resulting in responses such as “I like that one” and “that one is yucky.” Unlike the flat paint that I used for most of the work completed in this research project, *Ballistic Voices* utilizes gloss paint, which is more reflective and appears more as a surface. Regardless, the viewer is still required to read the discs as objects of ‘pure’ paint in order to negotiate physically and mindfully what is presented in the gallery space. The conundrum of objects and colours is, after all, simply a conundrum of objects and colours.



Figure 12: *Ballistic Voices* work in progress 2009

*Ballistic Voices* veered beyond the scope of the research project because its formal elements are, firstly, abstracted from reality and, secondly, organic rather than geometric in nature.

What interests me about this work is the introduction of the concept of synaesthesia. Synaesthesia is “the production from a sense-impression of one kind of an associated mental image of a sense-impression of another kind.”<sup>41</sup> In language, it is commonplace to make these associations through metaphor and, in addition, to mix the language

---

<sup>41</sup> Scholes, Percy A. *The Oxford Companion to Music*. (Tenth Edition). Oxford University Press: London 1980, p202

across disciplines – such as colours having *tones* and music being *chromatic*.

In *Ballistic Voices*, there are three colours per disc. The paint used is a commercial water-based enamel gloss. This particular type of paint, I discovered through experimentation, contains the most polymers and hence is the most elastic and least likely to split or crack when poured. The selections of colours I believe were subliminally chosen for their garish, and at times unpleasant, nature. Due to the proximity of several colours on a single disc there is a further random occurrence of an uncomplimentary mixture of primary, secondary and tertiary colours. Some of the colours *feel* as well as *look ugly* and the sound of these colours, because of their relations, is jarring on the ears. Interestingly, the gloss paint (as opposed to the flat paint used in the previous work *Delivery*) acts entirely differently. I feel that the gloss paint does not stimulate an experiential *sensation* or vibration<sup>42</sup> like the flat paint. The gloss nature of the paint becomes a surface which is reflective of the light in its immediate surroundings, as opposed to the flat paint, which has the effect of *giving off light* as colour.

## 2.4 OMG

At the outset of this whole project, I made a conscious decision to utilize the institutional framework as a site for the display of Reductive Abstraction. But what function does this site-space perform? I write site-space because I cannot accept the gallery as either – site or space – singularly: a *site* implying a place where particular things occur or a *space* being the thing-in-itself; the air, the floor, the walls, the light and so on. What *expectation* is considered by using the gallery as a frame for work that, in turn, utilizes the gallery as a *particular space*? Is the gallery then a frame? Perhaps what should be considered here is a *fusion*, or site-space, rather than a relevant positing of a site-specific work *within* a gallery-specific space?

---

<sup>42</sup> Delueze, G. *Francis Bacon: the logic of sensation*. Continuum: London and New York 2003. "Sensation is vibration." p45



During a trip to Paris in 2002, I witnessed a retrospective on Mondrian's work at the Musee D'Orsay.<sup>43</sup> My lasting impression of this exhibition, sustained with striking clarity, is the progression of paintings through various modes of representation. For me, the critical junctures occurred in the gridded paintings and those of the *Plus-Minus* series. Instead of a closed system of formal abstraction, these works achieved a kind of opening-out beyond the picture plane, thus implying a further sense of space beyond that enclosed within the frame.

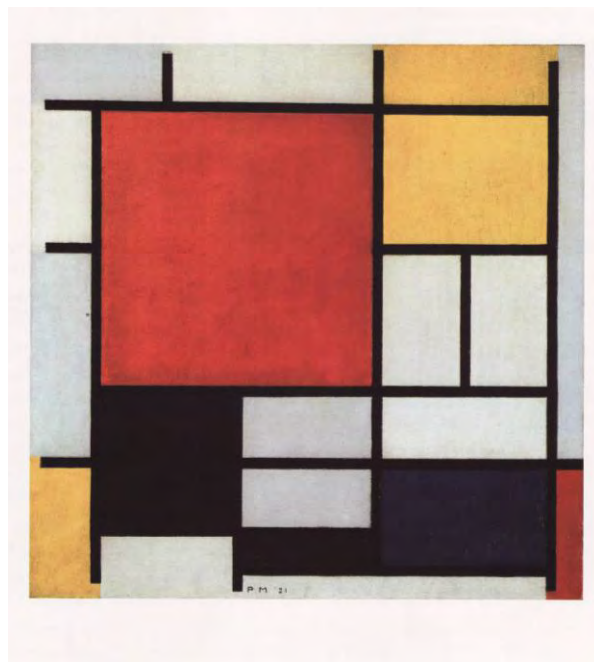


Figure 13: Piet Mondrian ***Composition with Red, Yellow, Blue and Black*** 1921, oil on canvas, 59.5cms x 59.5 cms

*Composition with Red, Yellow, Blue and Black* is an oil on canvas painting measuring 59.5 x 59.5 cm. Mondrian completed this work in 1921, thus making it one of the earliest precursors to the grid paintings that were to occupy the artist until his death in 1944. *Composition* consists of a lattice-like black grid composed of varying sizes of rectangular and square spaces. These spaces reveal either the white ground or the colours red, yellow black or dark blue. The work also appears to consist of some sections of a mist-like grey which have been omitted from the title. Mondrian's title implies that, as the artist, he has

---

<sup>43</sup> The exhibition was titled 'Mondrian: from 1892 to 1914, the Path to Abstraction'

deliberately created a self-referential objective painting; a composition on canvas of particular colours arranged in a relational way. Here, Mondrian employs a constructive and rational discourse in order to establish a “neutral expression.”<sup>44</sup> A similar effect can be observed in the artist’s use of formal geometric elements arranged in such a way as to create a “dynamic rhythm.”<sup>45</sup> Yet, in looking and reflecting upon this work, I cannot control my visual fixation on a section of grid that leaves the picture plane at the bottom right-hand side of canvas. This audacious gesture – which defies the notion that the viewer’s gaze must remain within the illusionistic space of the picture – signifies the beginning of Mondrian’s exploration of the lattice-intersected canvas, effectively demonstrating that all lines painted within a picture frame also carry the ability to enter the *outer* space beyond the object of the painting. A yellow rectangle at the top right and bottom left of *Composition’s* canvas, along with a small red rectangle towards the bottom right-hand corner, also leave the picture plane as if slipping outward; but, visually, they do not command the same attention of the black intersecting line. This single frame-dissecting line creates a sense of incongruity and a potential for *something else to happen*. The effect of being lead out of the picture is countered by the strength of a red enclosed square which commands the largest area of the canvas, contained slightly off-centre and to the left. It is this square which carries the responsibility of keeping the viewer’s gaze within the picture. It is, in other words, one framed monochrome of repeated framed monochromes within an allegorically frameless canvas.

In his later works, Mondrian engages with a system that is open, yet hermetically unified;<sup>46</sup> one in which the coloured parts upon the surface of the painting – beneath or within the grid – are relational to each other. This open system, with the grid structure intersecting to all edges of the canvas, actually appears more rational and achieves

---

<sup>44</sup> Mondrian, Piet. ‘Plastic Art and Pure Plastic Art’ cited in *Art in Theory 1900-2000: An Anthology of Changing Ideas* (New Edition). (Edited by Charles Harrison and Paul Wood). Blackwell Publishing: USA 2003, p391

<sup>45</sup> Ibid. p391

<sup>46</sup> Kuspit, Donald. ‘The Abstract self-Object’ cited in *Abstract Art in the Late Twentieth Century* (Edited by Frances Colpitt). Cambridge University Press: UK 2002, p133

the equilibrium and “universal expression of reality”<sup>47</sup> that Mondrian sought to emulate. Here, the grid no longer floats with a single anchor point to the space beyond; rather, it is, by association, part of the space beyond. There is a strong sense throughout Mondrian’s writing of a teleological trajectory which he embraces through the understanding that “*time is a process of intensification*, an evolution from the individual towards the universal, of the subjective towards the objective; towards the essence of things and of ourselves.”<sup>48</sup>

Paintings are objects at a vertical angle. The parallel plane that they occupy against the wall determines their status as grounded objects whose viewing primacy is a single surface. The viewer’s body is also vertical and therefore parallel to the body of the painting. The sculptural object is traditionally grounded to the floor and therefore horizontal. The viewer’s body – vertical in relation to this horizontality – circumambulates the object in actual space and time, perceiving multiple planes at varying angles to complete the perception of the objects entirety.

The architectural grid within Entrepot Gallery is one that, for me, speaks directly to the canonical grid of art history; that thing that modernism moves from in order to reinvent itself over and over. *OMG* is a work that seeks to exploit the boundaries between painting-sculpture and viewer-installation; thereby establishing a discourse between Reductive Abstraction and the modernist grid of Mondrian’s later paintings.

Entrepot Gallery is a small gallery space which is longer than it is wide. Upon entering through the door the viewer is confronted directly with a long facing wall. Turning right and looking down the length of the space the street can be seen through an angled wall of gridded windows at the end which continues up the right hand side until it meets the doorway.

---

<sup>47</sup> Ibid., Mondrian, p391

<sup>48</sup> Ibid. p389



Figure 14: Empty Enrepot Gallery.

If I take the vertical enclosed plane of the Entrepot Gallery window grid and reconstruct a similar grid which is unframed and fragmented, occupying a different planar angle in actual space, there remains a dialogue with the history of painting because the surface form or plane remains intact. Despite these planes becoming objects due to their occupation in actual space, they nevertheless remain planar: the negotiation of the viewing position is determined by their *angle*. *OMG's* grid – constructed of painted wood – occupies the gallery in three sections. These sections are hung from the ceiling in such a way that the planes crescendo upwards from the base of the window and outwards into the space of the gallery. Each section of wood that forms the frames of the grid-structure are coloured randomly, either white or black, confusing any sense of wholeness that a similar monochromatic structure would maintain. The entire face of the wooden painted sections of each plane, directed outwards toward the windows, is covered with chrome vinyl tape. This has the intention of reflecting Entrepot's own architectural grid back upon itself. Planes of orange, magenta and green of varying sizes (coloured vinyl on aluminum) are seen to be flung, from their imaginary enclosure on the

window grid, across the space and lodged against the wall and floor space opposite. There is an intentional attempt to fix these planes to the wall randomly and to give the sense that the planes, like Mondrian's intersecting black lines, are continuing beyond the present, actual space into an other, outer space.

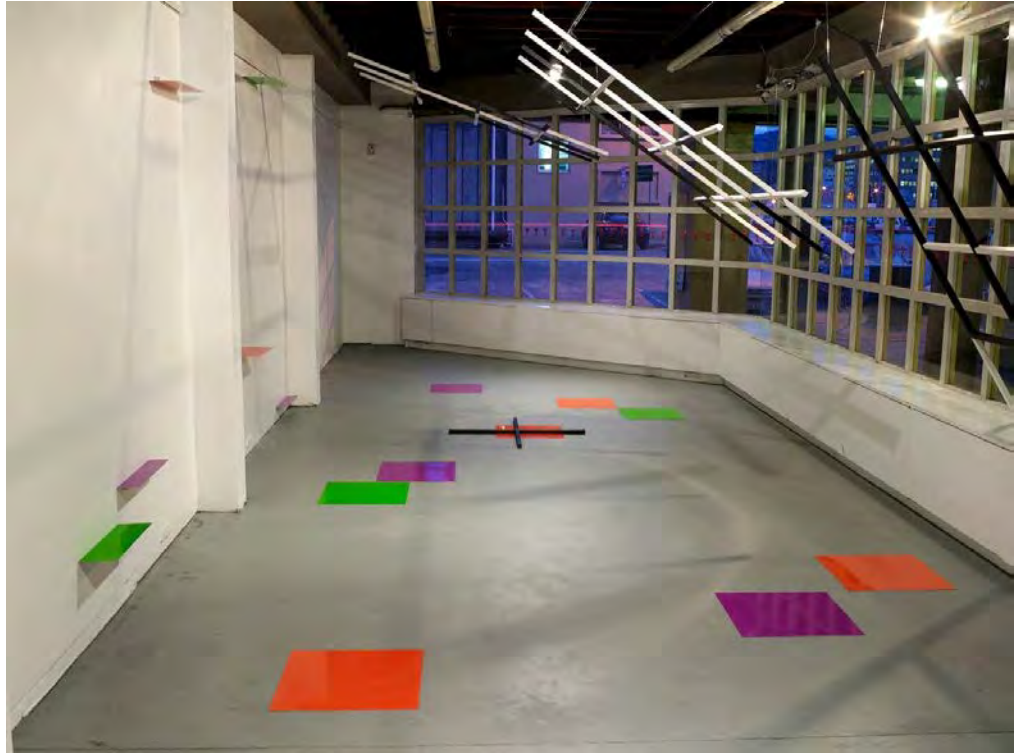


Figure 15: **OMG** 2009, wood, paint, aluminium and vinyl (Installation Entrepot Gallery, Hobart)

The grid structures of *OMG* are primarily relational to their site-space. The site of the Entrepot Gallery allows for an opening-out; a fracturing and a dispersion of the grid within the space. The decision to float the grid was made in opposition to the alternative: a falling grid. To fall is to acknowledge gravity and to signify a collapse, whereas floating is an act of physical defiance that offers a forward imaginary motion in space. From this point in the research, there is a desire to defeat the inertia of the grounded object and cause the objects to have an effect of hovering upon the surface or in space. To hover implies a weightlessness and tends towards *animation* of the object. As opposed to the grounded object, which gives the appearance of being *inanimate* and *passive*, the hovering object is animated and therefore active. The object's imaginary release from its closed architectural structure is an

intended disruption of the rational order; a spontaneous motion that works to confound “the absolute stasis of the grid.”<sup>49</sup> The initial viewpoint of *OMG* is a slightly distanced position at the doorway entrance to the gallery space. There is enough viewing space to take in the work as a whole and get a sense of the at-onceness of the installation. The viewer is alternatively able to enter the gallery and move around within the installation, bodily experiencing their own sense of the planes hovering overhead. This allows the viewer a multi-viewpoint of the work whereby the site can be viewed through its structures.

Up until this point, I have called the person who looks at a work of art a viewer. If we take the position of a person who enters the gallery as a site for Reductive Abstraction which is a site-referential installation or the position of a person sensating the colour of a work such as *Cosmic Solver Red 1278*<sup>50</sup>, the term *viewer* is no longer applicable. The viewer instead becomes a *perceiver* – acting in the present moment – and is one with the situation and event *through* sensory involvement and experience. To be a *perceiver* implies a more subjective response than a *viewer*, but not to the point of becoming a *participant* whose engagement is required to complete the work.

Gullar cites Mondrian in the ‘Theory of the Non-object’ as understanding “that the new painting, proposed in those pure planes, requires a radical attitude, a restart.”<sup>51</sup> This influence is also demonstrated by Mondrian’s pre-emptive desire for the continuation and realization of art “by the unification of architecture, sculpture and painting.”<sup>52</sup> It is only by being “purely constructive,”<sup>53</sup> Mondrian notes, that “a new plastic reality will be created.”<sup>54</sup> This is a concept

---

<sup>49</sup> Krauss, Rosalind. ‘The Originality of the Avant-Garde: A Postmodernist Repetition’ cited in *October*, Vol.18 (Autumn 1981). The MIT Press, p54

<sup>50</sup> See following chapter on the work *Solver Cosmic Red 1278*.

<sup>51</sup> Gullar, Ferreira. ‘Theory of the Non-Object’ cited in ‘Neoconcretism and Minimalism: On Ferreira Gullar’s Theory of the Non-Object’ by Michael Ashbury. *Cosmopolitan Modernisms* (Edited by Kobena Mercer) InIVA and MIT Press: London 2005, p171

<sup>52</sup> *Ibid.*, Mondrian, p392

<sup>53</sup> *Ibid.* p392

<sup>54</sup> *Ibid.* p392



which Oiticica interprets with his work *Grand Nucleus* 1960-1966.<sup>55</sup> Here, the painted planes or panels are seen to be hanging in actual space in a maze-like configuration. Oiticica developed *Grand Nucleus* through an intense study of colour. It presents an environment whereby changing hues of colour can be seen to permeate from the centre of several hanging double-sided painted planes in the gallery space. Although not visible in the image, through interaction and movement between several double-sided panels, the perceiver is offered a glimpse of “panels in tones of violet at the nuclear centre unfolding into a range of luminous yellows.”<sup>56</sup>



Figure 16: Hélio Oiticica ***Grand Nucleus*** 1960 -1966, oil and resin on wood fibreboard

I recently attended a survey show of Peter Cripps' work titled 'Peter Cripps: Towards an Elegant Solution 8 June – 25 July 2010' held at ACCA in Melbourne. Peter Cripps had been recommended to me as an artist of interest during my Honours year in 1998 in light of a work composed of *Siting* devices, resembling in part his *Field Work*. I was

---

<sup>55</sup> This work was recently reconstructed in the Tate Modern, London and the Museum of Fine Arts, Houston in 2007 under the exhibition title 'Helio Oiticica: The Body of Colour' cited in *Modern Painters*. Summer 2010, p63

<sup>56</sup> Gallagher, Ann. *Helio Oiticica: The Body of Colour Exhibition Guide*. Tate Modern 2007. <<http://www.tate.org.uk/modern/exhibitions/heliooitica/guide.sht>>

unsuccessful in locating any image documentation of *Field Work* so this was my first encounter with his work.



Figure 17: Peter Cripps ***Another History for H.B. and B.L.*** 1991 (recreated here at ACCA 2010), wooden panels and aluminium

At the entrance to the main gallery of ACCA I was confronted with *Another History for H.B. and B.L.* and was struck with its conceptual and structural similarity to *OMG*. Initially, rather than taking in the work as something new, I could not help stare at the way Cripps had occupied the space with planes of MDF flying off the walls at a similar angle to the grid plane leaving the windowed wall of Entrepot Gallery. I noticed the materiality of the panels as raw masonite construction material; unadorned by colour but with mirror polished aluminum covering several at random. Rather than finding the illusionistic space of painting upon the panels' surface, these panels reflect the site-space and the perceiver beyond. The bare masonite panels, in a Minimalist manner, are clearly self-reflexive of their objecthood and making.

Standing at a distance from the gallery entrance, the perceiver is immediately struck by the circular, almost mobile configuration of panels within the confines of the space. This is the most remarkable feature of the work for me. The panels start semi-reclined against the wall, just as one would find blank panels in a painting studio. They are then hung in random sequence, progressively traveling up the wall and into the gallery space floating overhead. One panel – horizontally suspended – acts as a bridge into the repeated arc on the other side



wall of the space. Although unsymmetrical, *Another History for H.B. and B.L.* creates a perpetually cyclical space that is both conceptual and visual: painting- ground, panel-wall, surface-perceiver, perceiver-site, object-space and back to painting-ground. The participation of the perceiver is paramount as they walk through the space and become implicated in its creation in an animated way.

*Another History for H.B. and B.L.*, for me, served to highlight the fact that the panel structures of *OMG* are in the act of traversing space. Not unlike the lines of the Mondrian's *Composition*, which leave the space of the painted frame, they represent both an imbedding in and passing through of the gallery wall. The perceiver is caught in a kind of crossfire with the panels at their feet, which includes a cross segment from the grid that alludes to the presaging of my latter exploration of singular objects in the site of the gallery. *OMG* is a challenge to the illusionistic space of painting to enter the real world of objects – abstract objects that are negotiated by the perceiver. As Cripps states in regards to his own object-making, “These objects are intended to rival every day objects in the world.”<sup>57</sup>

## **2.5 Cosmic Solver Red 1278**

Whilst making the work *Delivery*, I noticed that the effect offered by fluorescent-type paint had the potential to defy surface constraints and pervade space.

The question arose: could I make the appearance of colour a subjective experience with a three dimensional form? I decided to create another, separate crate, thereby focussing on a singular object unrelated conceptually to those being ‘delivered’ to the gallery in my previous work. In order to achieve this effect, my colour choice had to be such that the colour itself – its very thing-ness as an object – possessed such presentness as to override the presence of the object it was being applied to.

---

<sup>57</sup> Cripps, Peter. ‘Real Objects in the World’ (First published September 1994) cited in the catalogue *Peter Cripps: Towards an Elegant Solution* 8 June – 25 July 2010 Australian Centre for Contemporary Art: Australia 2010, p97

I had been staring daily at the Solver Paints Colour Chart, focussing in particular on the Brite-Glo colours. I think I was allowing myself to be drawn to a colour without making a conscious choice based on reason. I settled on the colour *Solver Cosmic Red 1278* and decided to make a crate to the height of slightly below average eye-level but not low enough to be able to see the inside of the crate. This was important as I wanted to experiment with seeing the colour before actually seeing where the colour came from. This was a wooden crate measuring H 1400mm x D 1000mm x W 1000mm, containing the colour Cosmic Red 1278. I titled the work *Solver Cosmic Red 1278*, after the colour of the same name on a Brite-Glo colour chart. To see the actual colour within the crate the perceiver is required to peer over the edge.



Figure 18: ***Cosmic Solver Red 1278*** 2009. Wood and paint. 1400mms x 1000mms x 1000mms

During construction, I wandered into a second-hand bookshop and serendipitously purchased a copy of 'The Doors of Perception' by Aldous Huxley<sup>58</sup> in which the author describes the effects of self-experimentation after taking Mescaline. An hour and a half after taking the drug, Huxley reports his experience as being "neither agreeable nor disagreeable ... it just *is*."<sup>59</sup> He later writes that:

Spatial relationships [cease] to matter very much ... place and distance cease to be of much interest. The mind does its perceiving in terms of intensity of existence, profundity of significance, relationships within pattern.<sup>60</sup>

For Huxley, colours achieve "an incandescence so intensely bright" that, when gazing at a chair, "the percept had swallowed up the concept I was so completely absorbed in looking, so thunderstruck by what I actually saw, that I could not be aware of anything else"<sup>61</sup>

Pinned in the back of the book, I found a condensed version of an article written by Huxley for 'Life' magazine in 1954, titled 'A Case for PSI'<sup>62</sup>. This article introduced me to William James' notion of cosmic consciousness, as well as the work of Dr Richard Maurice Bucke, a psychiatrist with his own description of cosmic consciousness. Bucke writes that cosmic consciousness is an experience wherein:

The person, suddenly, without warning, has a sense of being immersed in a flame, or rose-colored cloud, or perhaps rather a sense that the mind is itself filled with such a cloud of haze.<sup>63</sup>

Whilst investigating the properties of Cosmic Red, I inadvertently stumbled upon cosmic consciousness as a state in which that particular colour is experienced.

---

<sup>58</sup> Huxley, Aldous. *The Doors of Perception*. Chatto & Windus: London 1954

<sup>59</sup> Ibid., p12

<sup>60</sup> Ibid. p14

<sup>61</sup> Ibid. p42

<sup>62</sup> Huxley, Aldous. 'A Case for PSI'. *Life*. Time Inc: New York 1954

<sup>63</sup> Bucke, Richard Maurice. *Cosmic Consciousness: A Study in the Evolution of the Human Mind*. (Originally published in 1901). Applewood Books: USA 2000. p87

The first outcome of *Cosmic Solver Red 1278* was that the luminescent quality of Cosmic Red pervaded the interior negative space of the crate such that, upon looking inside, the colour appeared to take on the form of a single mass. The colour was spatialized to the extent that the contours within the crate were lost in a visual thickness of colour. This mass was one that projected from inside the crate onto the face of the perceiver looking from above, its red glow even reaching as far as the ceiling. Secondly, the transformative quality of the colour alluded to a simultaneous desire to avert the gaze whilst driving the gaze to continue to stare into the depth of the crate, creating a vertiginous experience.

It is useful to ask, after the act of confrontation, what gives the feeling<sup>64</sup> in Anish Kapoor's *Untitled 1995*<sup>65</sup>.

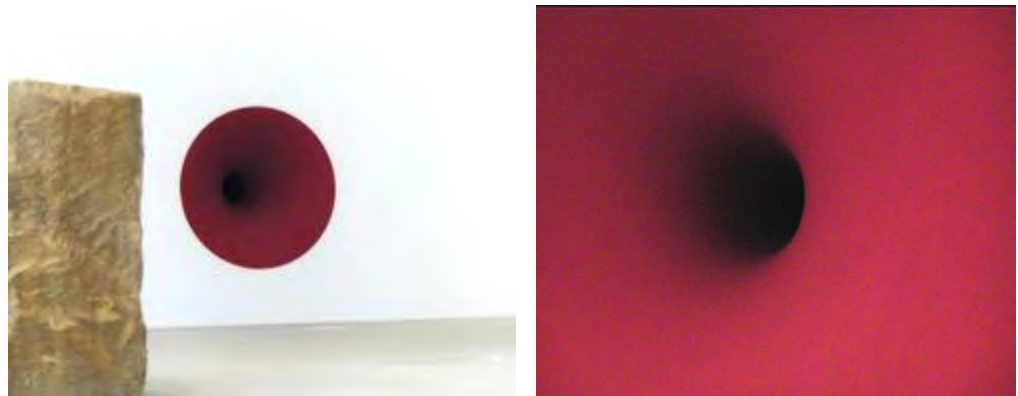


Figure 19 and 20: Anish Kapoor *Untitled 1995*. Plaster, acrylic paint and pigment. Diameter 201cms

Kapoor calls such a work “a ‘proto-object’... an object that comes into being before language, aesthetics, thought and conditioning.”<sup>66</sup> There is a suspended temporal moment of consumption by colour, a *redding*

---

<sup>64</sup> Langer, Susanne. ‘Feeling and Form’ cited in *Aesthetics: A Comprehensive Anthology* (Edited by Steven M. Cahn and Aaron Meskin). Blackwell Publishing: UK 2008. In this essay Langer, an American philosopher, distinguishes between “expression” as a symbol or presentation of a concept and an “expression as a feeling” which is contrary to an expression of cognition.

<sup>65</sup> This work was seen at the Asia Pacific Triennial of Contemporary Art, Queensland Art Gallery, 2006

<sup>66</sup> Poddar, Sandhini. ‘Suspending Disbelief: Anish Kapoor’s Mental Sculpture’ cited in *Anish Kapoor: Memory* (published on the occasion of the exhibition). The Solomon R. Guggenheim Foundation: New York 2008, p47

so forceful that it is not recognized that *it is red*. Instead, the sheer actuality of the colour hits the senses with a shock of intensity that defines its affect<sup>67</sup>. The void of *Untitled 1995* is not a perceptible void, but a doubtful void that moves optically inwards and outwards in uncertain succession. It is “in this no- man’s land [that] the object and the subject are refugees,”<sup>68</sup> eliciting a response that is more like an instinctive urge that drives the viewer’s hands to feel for the reality of an actual void. It takes only a moment of realisation – a moment of rational thought – for the unbiddable action to be harnessed and the viewer’s hands recoiled. The form of the void is one that feels instinctively bodily, like an orifice of indeterminate depth or vortex spinning ambiguously outwards, and it is hard to control the flickering impulse which averts then reconstitutes your gaze in order to determine if you have been deceived.

Thomas McEvilley describes Kapoor’s place as one which is “out of time, original, and central in a metaphysical sense.”<sup>69</sup> Kapoor’s work, McEvilley argues, rescues concealed unconscious thought from “the abyss of potentiality from which thoughts and feelings emerge like unpredictable efflorescences.”<sup>70</sup> I am interested in the idea of colour having an affective state. *Untitled 1995* is, in this way, a work that demands subjectivity. It resides in a potential space realised only through the subconscious. This space or state of being, described by McEvilley as emblematic of Kapoor’s work, is one of manifest essence.

---

<sup>67</sup> Massumi, Brian. ‘The Autonomy of Affect’ cited in *Deleuze: A Critical Reader* (Edited by Paul Patton). Blackwell Publishers: UK 1996, p221

<sup>68</sup> Ibid., Poddar. P47

<sup>69</sup> McEvilley, Thomas. *Sculpture in the Age of Doubt*. Allworth Press: New York 1999, p221

<sup>70</sup> Ibid., p221

## 2.6 *Tilted Constant*

I see her voice, a jagged shape of scarlet and bronze, shatter into the air  
till it hangs there under the sky, a deed of conquest and terror.<sup>71</sup>

William Golding "Free Fall" 1959

This fictional prose excerpt describes a torrid event by utilizing colour and shape in a visual metaphoric manner. Metaphor can be attributed to a synaesthetic sensibility in the writer which enhances the impact for the reader. In Golding's excerpt, colour conflates with shape, fragmenting then stilling a sound (voice) in mid-air. We (the readers) are with the boy, looking back over our shoulder and feeling the graphic force of words suspended above a woman's head. Imagine if, looking back, we see the shards of words laying at the woman's feet. We would be confronted with the effect of failure: harsh words that had succumbed to gravity and impotently fallen.

This quote, taken from the novel *Free Fall* by William Golding, provides a segue into the discussion of the concepts engaged by my work, *Tilted Constant*. Golding's use of synaesthetic metaphor draws attention away from narrative techniques such as character and plotline, instead focusing on the immediacy of subjective experience.

After completing *Cosmic Solver Red 1278* in 2009, I wanted to experiment further with colour as the subject of an art object. *Tilted Constant* asks the question: can a site be activated with a single object? I chose an ellipse 3 metres long and 1.8 metres wide and decided to paint it fluorescent orange. The word ellipse derives from the Latin *ellipsis*, meaning "to fall short of."<sup>72</sup> An ellipse is a cross section within a cone. It is an imperfect circle which nevertheless has an inherent "constant" in its construction. I am captivated by the mathematical beauty of the ellipse and the fact that it represents harmonic motion, thereby rendering it an infinite body.

---

<sup>71</sup> Golding, William. *Free Fall*. Penguin Books: UK 1959, p17

<sup>72</sup> *The Shorter Oxford English Dictionary: On Historical Principles (Third Edition) Volume II*. Clarendon Press: Oxford 1978

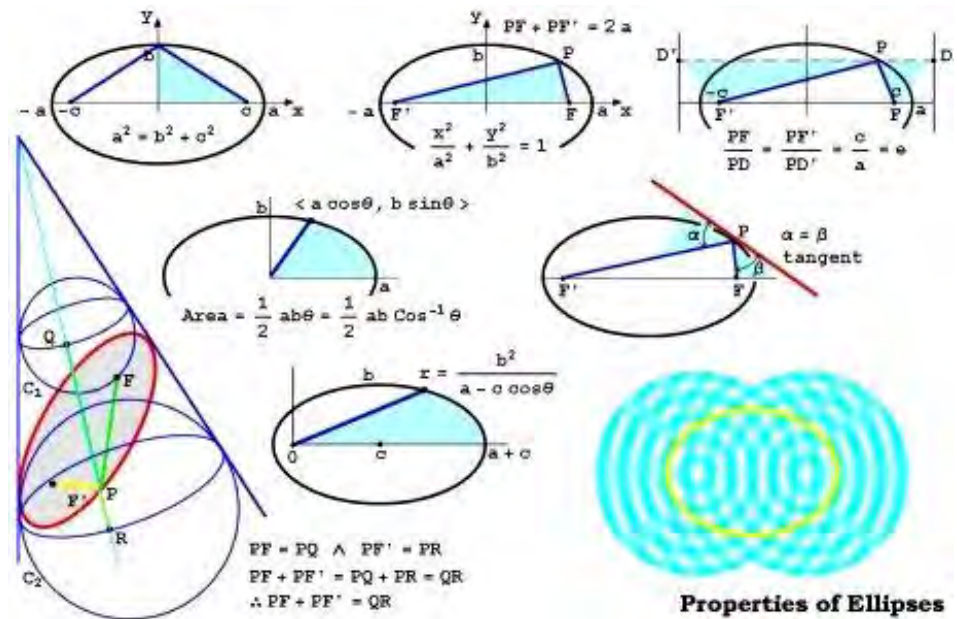


Figure 21: Diagram of ellipse equations.

In September 2009, I installed *Tilted Constant* in a completely black painted annexed space in Pigment Gallery, Melbourne.



Figure 22: *Tilted Constant* 2009. MDF and acrylic paint. 3000mms x 9mm x 1800mm



A critical moment occurred in the process of making because, after constructing a scale model of the gallery and placing an elliptical form across the space, one of my supervisors suggested that I tilt it 45 degrees off the floor. This immediately consumed and activated the volume of the space, rather than presenting the ellipse form as a painting-object frontal to the perceiver. The perceiver would now be required to look up and feel the force of the shape above. I had recently been impressed with the impact of seeing an image of Richard Serra's *Delineator*,<sup>73</sup> in which the artist has placed two huge corresponding steel plates on the gallery ceiling and floor.

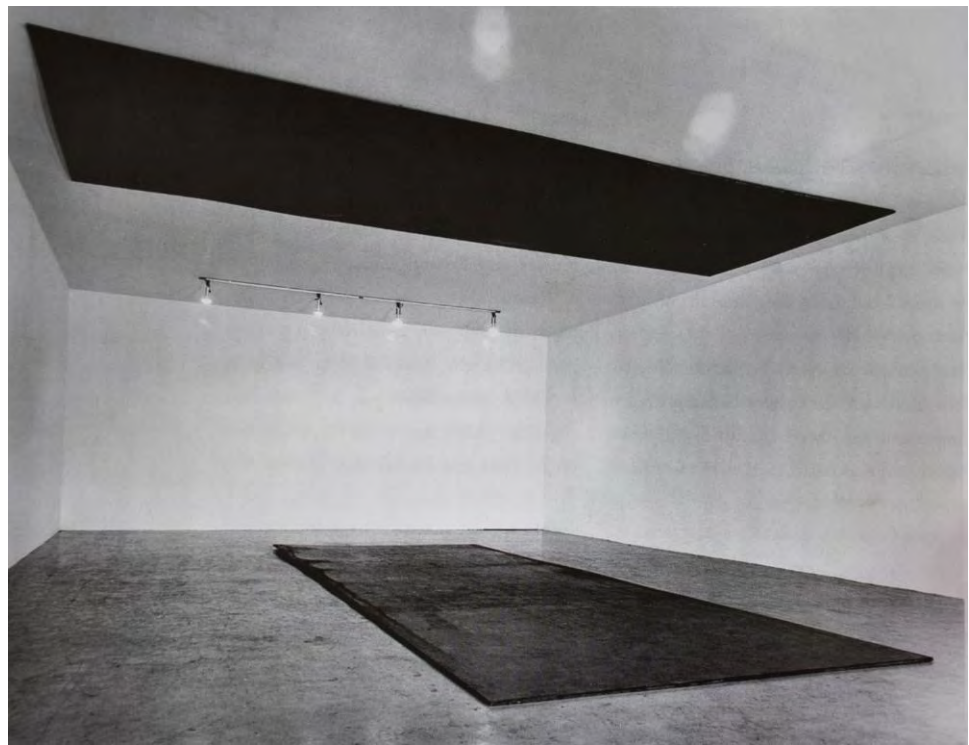


Figure 23: Richard Serra *Delineator* 1974-76. Two steel plates. Room installation.

Bergson talks of rendering “the unstable by means of the stable, the moving by means of the immobile,”<sup>74</sup> which in Serra’s work is realized through a feeling of anxiety – not dissimilar to the “terror” of Golding’s metaphor – that is wholly contained in the space between these two

---

<sup>73</sup> Varnedoe, Kirk. *Pictures of Nothing*. Princeton University Press: Washington 2006, p176

<sup>74</sup> Bergson, Henri. ‘Creative Evolution’ cited in *Art in theory 1900-2000: An Anthology of Changing Ideas* (New Edition). (Edited by Charles Harrison & Paul Wood). Blackwell Publishing: USA 2003, p143



sheets of steel. Although physically empty, this space is one of extreme density and compression, further alluding to Bergson's suggestion that "we make use of the void in order to think of the full."<sup>75</sup>

With *Tilted Constant*, I also installed an ultraviolet spotlight on the wall behind the viewer's entrance into the gallery. A black curtain was placed across the narrow doorway to ensure complete darkness, creating an enclosed space in which the bright colour and imposing form of the ellipse is the dominant means of sensory engagement. The pitch of the object, both structurally<sup>76</sup> and in reference to colour vibration and luminosity, renders the site a space of uncommon sense. The delineation of the room effectively dissolves into darkness, having been overpowered by the force of the colour radiating from the elliptical form. I chose fluorescent orange as I perceived it to have an extremely high frequency on the electromagnetic spectrum. Synaesthetically, for me, it is akin to a high F sharp on the musical scale; manifested as a piercing note or scream.

Robert Mangold has utilized the elliptical form, but it is not for this reason that I reference his work. The significance of Mangold for me is in the way that, as Donald Kuspit states, "Mangold mutes the hand, and uses colors that are far from muted."<sup>77</sup> The thing-ness of bright colour is such that it permeates the space beyond the surface of an object, causing other objects in close proximity to be bathed in its glow. This causes an alteration in the retina of the eyes that remains for a prolonged period of time after viewing. When you move from room to room after viewing a brightly coloured object, your surroundings are often perceived as muted or flattened – not unlike a coloured filter over the eyes.

---

<sup>75</sup> Ibid., p143

<sup>76</sup> Difficulties arose during the installation of *Tilted Constant* due to the weight of the object and the subsequent need to suspend it from the ceiling as well as fixing it to the opposing side walls of the gallery. It took four people to hold it up in the air over four hours and I felt the need to compromise for the sake of viewer safety. The installation was realized as I had planned, but I was fearful of the anchor point in the roof loosening and bringing the object down on someone's head.

<sup>77</sup> Kuspit, Donald. 'The Abstract Self-Object' cited in *Abstract Art in the Late Twentieth Century*. (Edited by Frances Colpitt). Cambridge University Press: UK 2002, p138

Mangold's work, for me, has a material becoming; an aesthetic experience through sensation rather than one of linguistic self-legitimization as described by Thomas Docherty. In his article 'The Aesthetic Event,' Docherty considers aesthetics as a way of settling the "meaning" crisis of abstraction.<sup>78</sup> For him, sensory experience is defined as the "historical becoming of the object" and "the aesthetic event ... [as one that] occurs in any art-object whenever we are able to cast off its signification, perhaps most importantly its abstract signification."<sup>79</sup> There is an interface in Mangold's work with the presence of the artwork and his intention is clear:

I want the work to be directly in front of you, something that is blocking your mental and physical path. You can size it up and walk away, but you can't see it as a recording or translation of what is already in the world.<sup>80</sup>

The ellipse has the attraction of alluding to harmonic constancy, yet when applied with fluorescent orange, the harmony of the form is subverted into one of blinding colour that permeates towards the viewer and thwarts the depth perception of both gallery and object. The perceiver is encouraged to interact with *Tilted Constant* without questioning meaning; to interact on the level of subjective experience.

## **2.7 Tune**

*Tilted Constant* marks the midpoint in this research project and is where I entered a period whereby I made some important decisions based on the outcomes of the previous work. Firstly I decided to create my own colours. I was tiring of the limited choice of colours I was using from pure commercial paints without studio manipulation of colour. I became so familiar with the names and the colours visually that I could name the company and the colour of the paint if I sighted it in another art work other than my own. Specifically, the work *Cosmic Solver Red 1278* dealt with presenting a particular colour with a

---

<sup>78</sup> Thomas Docherty 'The Aesthetic Event' cited in *Random Access 2: Ambient Fears* (Edited by Pavel Buchler and Nikos Papastergiadis). Rivers Oram Press: London 1996, pp 129-141.

<sup>79</sup> Ibid. p141

<sup>80</sup> Shiff, R., Storr, R., Danto, A.C., Princenthal, N. *Robert Mangold*. Phaidon Press Limited: New York 2000, p66

particular name thereby making that colour the subject of the object. Conceptually this achieved a specific intention - not only was the colour *Cosmic Solver Red 1278* presented but the property of that colour, one that was spatial and substance-like beyond its surface materiality, was presented as something new. I now felt a deep urge to create my own colours that could present another kind of “new” and throughout the following three or more months spent all my time in the studio mixing the commercial colours I had been previously using to create a unique colour spectrum. In fact this is now a continuous preoccupation and I barely enter the studio without staring at the chart I have made and thinking of another permutation of colour to make.



Figure 24: Studio showing colour mixing experiments

During this time of colour mixing I made a work titled *Tune*<sup>81</sup> as a gift for our son. This work is a significant reminder to me of the

---

<sup>81</sup> *Tune* is a studio-based back-up work.

experimentation with colour in this period and the outcome of that experimentation.



Figure 25: **Tune** 2009. Found object and acrylic paint. 342mm x 40mm x 346mm

Whilst mixing the colours I realized that I perceived them as notes from the musical scale. The green, for instance, is named “Perfect Green” and is Middle C. This was the most difficult colour to make and took many weeks of fiddling around with various combinations of paint. In my mind I could see the colour - I knew exactly the colour - I wished it to be. It was then a matter of manifesting that colour to match what I saw in my mind. There is debate in my mind questioning whether I was making a particular green “Middle C” or whether the eventual colour happened to be Middle C. This sensation was strongest with green and other colours have both similar and different connotations - for example the violet colour is “Friday” and the note A in a lower register. I decided to utilize this synaesthetic response to colour by painting within the small rectangular sections of a found old wooden biological glass slide box and thinking about the colours combining as if a musical notation. After laying down the first few “notes” I was horrified that they were so loud and staccato, which is the antithesis to the gentle nature of our son, so then went through a

process of *sustaining* the notes by tonally lightening them in graduations. This afforded instant relief from the staccato and I was able to have the “sounds” of the colours stretch up and down the small compartments implying a more pleasant length of note. I titled the work *Tune* because of the affiliation of the colours with sounds. This period of studio mixing was very intense and satisfying as I knew that from this moment on I was only going to use my own spectrum of colours and that there was the potential for endless more experiments with the mixing of the commercial paints into my own colours.

Secondly, I made the decision that I wished to focus on single objects. I realized that an acknowledgement of the singularity of an object opened up the potential of the object’s appearance and therefore their discreet particularity to be a primary concern.

## **2.8 Interference Field**

*You are looking at a field. You are looking at a floating field. You are looking at a floating gridded field of nine hundred interchangeable squares. You are looking at a floating gridded field of nine hundred interchangeable squares with a rod of varying length on some squares. You are looking at a floating gridded field of nine hundred interchangeable squares with a rod of varying length on some squares and the colours yellow orange and grey. You are looking at a floating gridded field of nine hundred interchangeable squares with a rod of varying length on some squares and the colours yellow orange and grey in no particular order. You are looking at a floating gridded field of nine hundred interchangeable squares with a rod of varying length on some squares and the colours yellow orange and grey in no particular order and it seems to be moving. You are looking at a floating gridded field of nine hundred interchangeable squares with a rod of varying length on some squares and the colours yellow orange and grey in no particular order and it seems to be moving and you are losing sense of...*

*Interference Field* is a work of four fields. The first field is the structural layer, consisting of square modules without rods. The second field consists of rods of varying length that float – although still attached – over the surface of the first field. The third field is the entire object and its activity in space. The fourth field is the

conceptual field; the relationship between the work and the concept of “interference.”



Figure 26: **Interference Field** 2010. MDF and acrylic paint. 80mm x 2700mm x 2700mm

The first field is an orthogonal grid of 900 square modules measuring 30mm x 30 mm x 9mm. Each module is painted yellow, orange or dark-grey and arranged randomly within a square format of 2700mm x 2700mm. The colours yellow and orange (which switch hysterically to lime and red, depending on their complementary position) are deliberately artificial and outwardly luminescent. The dark-grey squares are flat and inwardly dull, creating disparate voids that break the surface of the field. John Elderfield, in his article ‘Grids,’ considers two kinds of grids as frameworks: “those that work to cohere a surface and those that fracture it.”<sup>82</sup> Elderfield cites Carl Andre’s *Equivalent VIII* (1966) as an example of the “cumulative method, rather than the subtractive one that most often belongs to grid painting.”<sup>83</sup> Constructed of 120 fire-bricks, Andre’s grid is one mathematically determined to reference a coherent surface.

*Equivalent VIII* (1966) is a grounded, literal and self-referential construction. The cumulative method of construction that Andre employs makes it possible

---

<sup>82</sup> Elderfield, John. ‘Grids’ cited in *Artforum*. May 1972, p53

<sup>83</sup> Ibid., p56



to perceive the work all-at-once for what it is. In comparison, *Alcloud* (2007) introduces an aleatory element that disrupts the coherent order of the grid. Andre has tossed 144 aluminium cubes (each measuring 10cm x 10cm x 10cm) across the surface of the floor and this gesture determines *Alcloud*'s composition. It is a work that rests where it has been spilt; creating a “new” pattern each time the gesture is undertaken. Here, the silver materiality of aluminium cubes interacts with the “cloud” of the work’s title, creating a referential sensibility that is uncharacteristic of Andre’s earlier cumulative forms.



Figure 27: Carl Andre *Equivalent VIII* 1966. Fire-bricks. 130mm x 690mm x 229mm



Figure 28: Carl Andre *Alcloud* 2007. Aluminium cubes. Dimensions variable

In one sense, *Interference Field* is cumulative and coherent. As Rosalind Krauss states, “the absolute stasis of the grid, its lack of hierarchy, of

center, of inflection, emphasizes not only its self-referential character, but – more importantly – its hostility to narrative.”<sup>84</sup> The outcome of *Interference Field* in this sense is complete abstraction, devoid of signification beyond the materiality and composition of the art object. Conversely, *Interference Field* is a work imbued with fragmentation and uncertainty. The perceiver is unable to logically apprehend the grid as a whole due to the fractured nature of its surface; that which is the first field of perception. Here colours are not only intense but active in their intensity, distracting to the point of transcending form.

The second field is comprised of dark-grey painted rods of variable length, perpendicularly attached to the edge of most (but not all) modules of the first field. During the process of making *Interference Field*, my intention was to devise a method by which the perceiver would be able to interchange modules during the time of exhibition. This, I theorized, would emphasize the elements of mutability and chance that are engaged in the work. It was this thought that led to the addition of rods attached to the first field as a kind of handle. The relationship between the first field and second field is, in this sense, a seemingly logical one. The dark, tonal colour of the rods simulate drawn marks which provoke the need to find interconnecting relations. The perceiver instinctively attempts to make an association between the rods in an effort to reconnect a static grid. To maintain the fragmented stasis of the second field is therefore to deny reconciliation, thereby setting up a momentum of uncertainty.

During experimentation with models of squares and rods, I was immediately visually and conceptually reminded of Mondrian's *Plus-Minus* series of paintings which were conceived through a process of abstraction.<sup>85</sup> *Composition with Lines (Composition in Black and White)* was in this way realised through the earlier *Pier and Ocean* painting series. The pictorial field of *Composition* is a dispersal of short black

---

<sup>84</sup> Krauss, Rosalind E. *The Originality of the Avant-Garde and Other Modernist Myths*. MIT Press: USA and London 1985, p158

<sup>85</sup> In a modern sense, Mondrian's Plus-Minus paintings could be seen to follow the grid works instead of the grid works succumbing to repetition and stasis. Mondrian as such deconstructs the equilibrium of the grid, not destroying unity but instead upending its stasis.



lines contained within a circle formation, imposed upon a square-framed white background. *Composition's* field of indeterminate appearance is held within a circle – itself within a square frame – ensuring that the perceiver's gaze is one of perplexed attention. In this moment, the perceiver does not think but perceives in a state that is rapt and unconscious.



Figure 29: Piet Mondrian **Composition with Lines (Composition in Black and White)** 1917. Oil on canvas. 108.4 x 108.4 cms

The third field of *Interference Field* is the object's entirety occupying space, perceived now as a whole. Andrew Benjamin theorizes that the recognition of the "singularity of the sculptural will entail having to show greater patience in working with space and thus in detailing its presence ... presence here [being] the activity of space."<sup>86</sup> In this sense, *Interference Field* appears to be a pictorial field in another place. It is not a painting space vertical to the wall but rather, the space of an object that floats horizontally – attempting to defy gravitational forces – so as to provoke the question: what is the "activity of space"<sup>87</sup> here?

---

<sup>86</sup> Benjamin, Andrew. 'The Activity of Space' cited in *Art & Design Magazine Profile No.55*. Academy Group Ltd.: London 1997, p56

<sup>87</sup> Ibid., p56

*Interference Field* is a work that demands presentness. It is the sum of its corresponding parts; not a predetermined composition but nevertheless a construction that is geometrically predetermined and, therefore, a work of art-as-object. In the moment of beholding, the perceiver's experience is subjective: it belongs to the subject (the perceiver). The perceiver's gaze is transfixed but the object is far from visually fixed. This moment does not feel reflective – implying a drawing up from memory – nor contemplative,<sup>88</sup> which involves a type of perception that is both introspective and passive. The perceptive experience of *Interference Field* is one contained within an active trance-like space. In this space, the subject and the object are fused. This ambiguity is made more apparent by the structural pattern of the grid. Once implying a closed system, here the grid disintegrates in order to become an open system or field upon which there is the potential for infinite compositional possibilities. The spatialization and activity of colour in combination with the dispersal of rods constantly creates a kind of nystagmus. The activity of space occurs across the surface. As such, it is all surface and all uncertain: it is situated in a position of levitation. Looking down upon the surface of the work, it is as if the perceiver is caught in a measure of time without awareness of the measurement of its passing. Although the duration of the perceiver's gaze may be literally endless, in reality it is held within a moment like the ambiguity of the word *then* – one that has been in the past and will be in the future.

The fourth field is the conceptual field, or relationship between the work and its concept. In physics, *interference* is the act of two waves colliding to form a new wave. With this work, it is a term used to represent the superposition of conceptual and perceptual art. *Interference Field* began with a working-through of the conceptual process of historical reflexivity. The organization of repeated modules in order to form a grid-like structure was propositional in nature and therefore conceptual in construction. By this I mean that it was necessary to set limits in the initial thinking-out process of the work.

---

<sup>88</sup> A monochrome painting, for example, is one that demands a level of contemplation or reflection.

Once the number and scale of modules was mathematically determined in order to construct a grid measuring 2700mm x 2700mm, the rest of the construction process was given over to working out – over a long period of time and through several trials – the colour selection. The selection of colours needed to be intuitive for, as soon as I started to think logically, the true sense of what I was after – non-referential, abstract colours – was lost. I chose the term *interference* not as an allusion to the interference of visual perception in the work (which was a perceptual outcome) but rather in order to highlight the tension between objective methodology and subjective experience.

Apart from looking and feeling disturbing, *Interference Field* fulfils the criteria for the making of a literalist object as defined by Michael Fried, whereby “the material itself confronts one in all its literalness, its ‘objectivity,’ its absence of anything beyond itself.”<sup>89</sup> As Fried claims, the central concept of literalist art and theory is “essentially a presentment of endless, or indefinite, *duration* ... [in that] the experience in question *persists in time*.”<sup>90</sup> This “duration of *experience*,”<sup>91</sup> that which is “paradigmatically theatrical,”<sup>92</sup> clearly defines the experience offered by the literalist object as one that is contingent on the perceiver. Fried’s theatricality of experience is aligned with the temporal quality of literalist art. Andre’s floor pieces, for example, are commonly associated with the serial or repetitive nature of their components. As such, the quality of “endlessness, being able to go on and on, even having to go on and on, is central both to the concept of interest and to that of objecthood.”<sup>93</sup>

There is a psychical spatial difference between Fried’s quality of duration and the measured gaze of the perceiver that I wish to articulate. As a point of departure from Fried’s literalist theory, I take the concept *interest* to be that which is wholly objective and, hence, in

---

<sup>89</sup> Fried, Michael. ‘Art and Objecthood’ cited in *Minimal Art: A Critical Anthology* (Edited by Gregory Battcock). Studio Vista Ltd.: Great Britain 1969, p143

<sup>90</sup> Ibid., p144

<sup>91</sup> Ibid., p145

<sup>92</sup> Ibid., p145

<sup>93</sup> Ibid., p144

opposition to subjective experience.<sup>94</sup> Philosophically, Fried's "interest" may be attributed to the "aesthetic attitude"<sup>95</sup> whereby an "interest-driven attention tends to be engaged only long enough to identify the interesting feature"<sup>96</sup> without contemplation. This occurs with the literalist object due to its highly reductive nature as an instantaneous gestalt and apprehended immediately as such. In opposition, the disinterested gaze is one of contemplation, argued by Kemp "to explain the rationality of subjective presumptions of universality, but also to help explain the peculiar value of aesthetic experience."<sup>97</sup>

Roger Fry, in the manner of Kant's disinterestedness<sup>98</sup>, states that "an object of art ... must in the first place be adapted to that disinterested intensity of contemplation, which we have found to be the effect of cutting off the responsive action ... our sensations will demand order and will require variety for full stimulation."<sup>99</sup> Fry then goes on to suggest that the maker possesses a "consciousness of purpose" that elicits sympathy in the perceiver by "revealing to us ourselves in revealing (latently) himself."<sup>100</sup> It is these qualities of heightened experience, so often found in the imaginative lives of artists that determine aesthetic judgment.<sup>101</sup> *Interference Field* demonstrates a conflict between the *interested* objective sensation of apprehending the square object hovering in space and the *disinterested* subjective feeling

---

<sup>94</sup> There can be seen a cleaving of Neoconcretism from Minimalism – Fried's literalism – in the intention of their associated artists: the former strive to instil subjectivity in their work in order to revoke the rational order of the concrete or constructive art. This is achieved through an acknowledgement of the intuitive process.

<sup>95</sup> Kemp, Gary. 'The Aesthetic Attitude' cited in *British Journal of Aesthetics*, Vol.39, No. 4, October 1999, pp392-399

<sup>96</sup> *Ibid.*, p392

<sup>97</sup> *Ibid.*, p396

<sup>98</sup> Kant, Immanuel. 'Critique of Judgment' cited in *Aesthetics: A Comprehensive Anthology* (Edited by Steven M. Cahn and Aaron Meskin). Blackwell Publishing: UK 2008

<sup>99</sup> Fry, Roger 'Essay in Aesthetics' cited in *Art in Theory 1900-2000: An Anthology of Changing Ideas* (New Edition). (Edited by Charles Harrison and Paul Wood). Blackwell Publishing: USA 2003, p79-80

<sup>100</sup> *Ibid.*, p80

<sup>101</sup> *Ibid.*, p80

of visual turmoil. Here, the disinterested gaze – characterised by a state of passive contemplation – is, in contrast, both intense and active.

The array of fields described in this analysis ascertains two claims. First, that *Interference Field* utilizes the syntax of Reductive Abstraction through its emphasis on colour and geometric forms. During the process of construction, however, these conceptual qualities are confounded. The work starts with an idea; a plan of repetition that involves modules of limited colours arranged in a grid. The syntax of geometric forms is that which orders a particular system in a rational manner. This disintegrates into paradox with the introduction of chance. *Interference Field* is a different work each time it is presented for exhibition. Its method of construction can be likened to the musical term *open* or *mobile form*, utilized by John Cage and Earle Brown to describe a procedure of indeterminacy whereby musical parts can be played in different sequences and the musical score can be interpreted in any order.<sup>102</sup> Such an intrusion of chance into what is otherwise structurally determined (the musical score, for example) is analogous to the Neoconcretist's desire to "reject the idea that a work of art [is] predetermined, since this would inevitably dispose of intuition and expression within the creative process."<sup>103</sup>

Similarly, the yellow and orange squares of *Interference Field* serve to fragment the very surface of perception whilst the grey disperses the wholeness of the plane by acting as a visual void. The perceptual and formal qualities of the work incite a kind of conflict whereby there is a feeling of uncertainty – due in part to the bombardment of colour and shifting surface – which confounds the objectness of the object. This sets up a particular quality to the perceiver's gaze: the conflicted gaze.

---

<sup>102</sup> Kennedy, Michael. *The Oxford Dictionary of Music*. Oxford University Press: Oxford and New York 1985

<sup>103</sup> Asbury, Michael. <<http://gallery-32.blogspot.com/2010/02/neoconcrete-experience-11-dec-2009-30.html>> Dr. Michael Asbury is a curator, writer and art historian who has a particular interest in peripheral cultures and the arts. He has translated most of the references in this thesis in regards to the Neoconcrete movement and is a foremost authority on Neoconcretism. I was able to obtain, via email correspondence, his catalogue essay for a show at Gallery 32 that highlighted a resurgence of interest in Neoconcretism worldwide, coinciding with its 50 year commemoration in 2009.

*Interference Field* is a work enveloped in indeterminacy, dealing as it does with the conflation of objectivity and subjectivity and the gaze of the percipient. For me, it is the realisation of a significant outcome that, until now, has been in a continuous state of unfolding.

## **2.9 *All that I am***

Throughout the course of my research, I have sought to explore the disruption of the illusionistic space in painting and the presentation of painted objects in “real” space. Such objects directly reference frame and surface. There is a concern for the position of the perceiver in relation to these objects and their reception within the space of the gallery. The object, perceiver and gallery space correspond according to the position of the object, the movement of the perceiver and the presence and scale of the space in which they are contained. There is also a psychical space, held within the gaze of the perceiver toward the object, which previously I have called the conflicted gaze.

*All that I am* was made in response to a curatorial premise. The premise stipulated that the work be made of a particular material: fishing line. The result was something that came immediately formed as an image in my mind. It is, in an all-at-onceness, the assemblage of 250 painted lines forming a column approximately 1800mm high and 500mm in diameter. Its assemblage is vertical and the lines straight, corresponding to the gravitational pull of the ground. Fishing line is used as a carrier on which colour has been applied in the form of commercial paint. The paint was chosen after a series of experiments which ascertained the coherence of various types of paint to the surface of the fishing line. The process of painting the many lines was more complex than I had imagined. To achieve the desired result, I set up rods in my studio at home, marked out the height of the section to be painted and attached and painted each line individually three or four times. The fishing line was threaded through two drilled boards which were held in place by a constructed jig.

The spacing presented by this object is complex. The perception, and hence apprehension, of the work changes constantly as the perceiver moves around it. This movement dictates the sighting of nuances and differences of colour but does not necessarily alter the form of the

object as a whole. The form is always present and its unity unaltered. Due to its multiplicity of segmentation, the work possesses a visual pliability or plasticity that renders the perciever's gaze unstable. The multiple appearances are confounded by the internal workings of space, as it is also possible for the perciever to look inside and through the work. *All that I am* represents a complete deconstruction of surface, as any attempt to complete a shape or pattern held by a single viewpoint is effectively disintegrated.



Figures 30/31: *All that I am* in the process of being made.





Figure 32: *All that I am* 2010. Fishing Line and paint. 2950mm x 500mm x 500mm



Figure 33: Detail of *All that I am*

Anne Truitt is an artist who has utilized the language of Reductive Abstraction through the use of simple painted columnar forms that enact “an exercise in both perception and emotional association.”<sup>104</sup> Truitt has been associated with both the Colour Field painters and the Minimalists. This dual association and the subsequent outcomes of Truitt’s work can be likened to Kuspit’s theory of integration, in which the two forms of abstraction – mechanistic and organicist – once combined make “hermetic pictures.”<sup>105</sup> These works, Kuspit states, “generate an empathic response”<sup>106</sup> by creating a “subtly open system

<sup>104</sup> Hileman, Kirsten. *Anne Truitt: Perception and Reflection*. GILES in association with the Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden, Smithsonian Institution: UK and Washington, DC 2009, p13. Anne Truitt, who died in 2004, was a significant artist working in America from the 1960’s to the late 1990’s. This recent monograph of her work has been published for the first time to accompany an exhibition of her work at the Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden in Washington.

<sup>105</sup> Kuspit, Donald. ‘The Abstract Self-Object’ cited in *Abstract Art in the Late Twentieth Century*. (Edited by Frances Colpitt). Cambridge University Press: UK 2002, p134. Kuspit’s essay is written about abstraction in painting but the concept is one that I can easily relate to my own work and objects.

<sup>106</sup> Ibid., p134



of abstraction – a system that is manifestly closed, but latently open.”<sup>107</sup> By using the reductive non-representational form of the column, Truitt is able to imbue her work with an internal meaning that is fundamentally dependent upon her intuitive use of colour<sup>108</sup>. The acrylic paint utilized in her columnar works was applied by brush, creating depth through multiple layers in an attempt to defy surface appearance. Such a constructive, layered painting technique renders Truitt's columns more akin to a body of colour than colour-as-surface, as “color appears to radiate from within, rather than to function as a skin over the object.”<sup>109</sup>

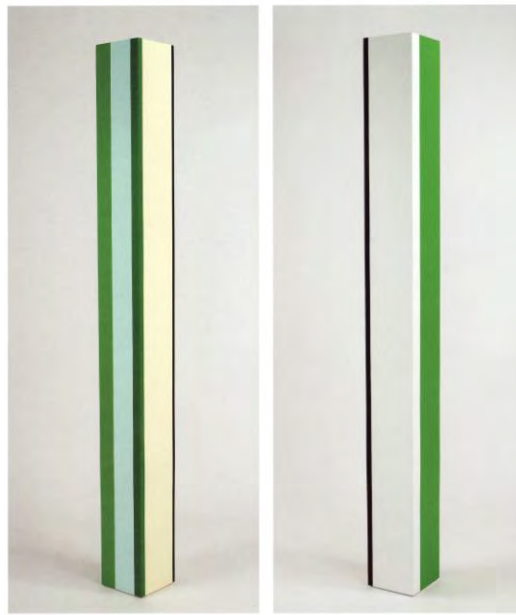


Figure 34: Anne Truitt **View** 1999. Acrylic on wood. 2058mm x 203mm x 203mm

Such internal meanings were not spoken of at the time of Truitt's association with the Minimalists, as she was content to allow her work to stand as a form of present and specific objecthood. In response to these works, Greenberg stated that “despite their being covered with rectilinear zones of color, I was stopped by their deadpan

---

<sup>107</sup> Ibid., p134

<sup>108</sup> Truitt wrote at length in her *Daybook: The Journey of an Artist* (Penguin 1982) of the emotional traumas and struggles with her life and art in the style of a journal.

<sup>109</sup> Colpitt, Frances. *Minimal Art: The Critical Perspective*. UMI Research Press: USA 1990, p27

'primariness,' and I had to look again and again, and I had to return again, to discover the power of these 'boxes' to move and affect."<sup>110</sup> – As Greenberg further claims, unlike Robert Morris's similar forms that emphasize the object and its phenomenological positioning in space, "Truitt's sculpture [has] this kind of presence but [does] not *hide* behind it."<sup>111</sup>

The presentation of objects not recognizable from the real world yet containing personal experience from the world of real things is a practice akin to my methodology of art making, whereby felt experiences and intuition underpin the process of the work as it comes into being.

It is impossible to deny the figurative verticality, scale and positioning of the perceiver in relation to *All that I am*. It is a work that, in its dimension and scale, directly alludes to the dimensions and scale of the human body, thereby "echoing the uprightness of the spectator, and establishing bodily empathy with him and her."<sup>112</sup> The placement of the work in a sectioned-off cubicle of the gallery was itself determined by the perceiver's position. During installation, I was constantly asking myself the question: if you were to wait in this space to meet someone, where would you stand? The placement of the work is compositionally a result of the tacit knowledge which was gained by walking around the internal architectural space several times and stepping back to imagine various possible positions. Whether the work has the appearance of being a figurative object is not the intended conceptual emphasis, but merely a formal consideration. Most important for me is that the perceiver becomes caught in the eye of the work and, as such, experiences a particular state of being: the feeling of being segmented and transmutable visually, whilst retaining a sense of wholeness in relation to the object and subject itself. By not painting the fishing wire all the way from the base of the floor to the

---

<sup>110</sup> Greenberg, Clement. 'Recentness of Sculpture' cited in *Minimal Art: A Critical Anthology* (Edited by Gregory Battcock). Studio Vista: USA 1968, p185

<sup>111</sup> Ibid., p185

<sup>112</sup> Colpitt, Frances. *Minimal Art: The Critical Perspective*. UMI Research Press: USA 1990, p69

ceiling, it was my intention to create a body of painted lines that hovered (rather than stood) on a definite surface. This deliberate hovering of the painted object alludes to an anxiety about our position in the world as one that is unstable; one that acknowledges the inevitability of transience.

The chosen title, *All that I am*, is a play-on-words that further highlights the ambiguous quality of the work. Like painted strands of fishing line, the title conceptually alludes to being both the object (painted lines as painted lines) and the subject, or “in subjective terms ... the dialectical complexity of the self.”<sup>113</sup> The simultaneous visual inherentness and disintegration of structure as a whole is central to the conception of this work. Here, ambiguity and dematerialization have been consciously employed to prove Kuspit's claim that “disequilibrium remains a fluid process rather than a crystalline aesthetic which is why it can empathetically engage with us.”<sup>114</sup>

The statement that I chose to accompany *All that I am* acts as a complex reference to both the object and internal states of being, reading as it does as a concrete poem:

```

s y s l p p c c d f g p s b s o
u e e i u i o u r o r u t l t r
s l g n r t l t a r e l a u i a
p l m e p c o w m e l p e l n
e o e a l h u n l n e l l g
n w n r e e r e d e e
d t d e s d
e e d s
d d -
      o
      u
      t

```

---

<sup>113</sup> Kuspit, Donald. ‘The Abstract Self-Object’ cited in *Abstract Art in the Late Twentieth Century* (Edited by Frances Colpitt). Cambridge University Press: UK 2002, p134

<sup>114</sup> Ibid., p139

## 2.10 *Notwithstanding Then*

After completing the first draft of my exegesis in October, I felt the need to make another work which would, in itself, reflect a conclusion to the research project. For several weeks, I had been playing with the deconstruction of a cardboard rectangular box. I had essentially cut out *components* in various permutations in order to make a complete rectangular box. I then arranged the different sections in a variety of ways.

I eventually arrived at a permutation that was agreeable and decided to make a 1:2 scale model of the work. This would help me to determine that the form was also structurally stable. The model proved itself to be very difficult to hold in the position I wanted so I decided to construct the object to scale, taking the chance that it would come together. I cut out two lots of MDF so as to allow the ability to alter their angles and scale if necessary. Already from the previously made 1:2 scale models I had changed the ratio of the top and bottom to the sides as I felt it did not look right. In between cutting out the different sections in the workshop, I spent time in the studio creating “new” colours that I wished to use on the finished form. I am always convinced of the colour in my mind prior to its actual creation and so the mixing of the colours is done in order to replicate that which I have already “seen”.



Figure 35: *Notwithstanding Then* (work in progress) 2011.

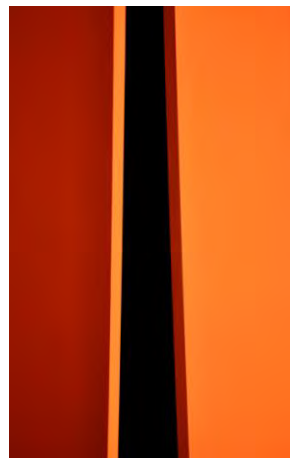


Figure 36: Detail of *Notwithstanding Then*

The finished work is a MDF painted column in the act of opening out, measuring H1800mm x 300mm x 300mm. It is in the act of opening out that the column becomes a different form and object. This different object represents a tipping-back of the original form: a closed, solid box which has been rendered open and forced to support itself on the extended bottom flap. It is a reductive object that has an inside space and an outside space. The inside space is painted a flat, dark blue-green which has a low, resonant drone. The outside surface is a clear, bright yellow-orange. This outside colour activates the work as an object and pervades beyond its external face in order to become part of the space occupied by the perceiver. As a work of Reductive Abstraction, it has a figurative verticality of uncertain standing. It is through reduction that *Notwithstanding Then* defies the Minimalist 'specific object' Morris describes as being "singular, dense, articulated, and self-contained ... as having succeeded in removing itself from space."<sup>115</sup>

*Notwithstanding Then* allows for the exploration of an animated reductive object which, despite its abstract nature being seen as a "counter-pole to the need for empathy,"<sup>116</sup> elicits a subjective response by its dis-order and colouring. As an object, it augments the possibility that Reductive Abstraction can be encoded with an empathetic, aesthetic response. An empathic response is implicit in the work through its colour spatialization and the figurative form.

Juliet Koss, in her article 'The Limits of Empathy,'<sup>117</sup> describes empathy as being "a process of emotional and psychological projection"<sup>118</sup> or, with reference to the interdisciplinary term *Einfühlung*, the activity of *feeling into*. As such, it describes an embodied response that is "simultaneously haptic and optic"<sup>119</sup> and capable of creating a "potentially uncomfortable

---

<sup>115</sup> Morris, Robert. *Continuous Project Altered Daily: The Writings of Robert Morris*. An October Book. MIT Press: Cambridge, Massachusetts 1993, p185

<sup>116</sup> Worringer, Willhelm. 'Abstraction and Empathy' cited in *Art in Theory 1900-2000: An Anthology of Changing Ideas* (New Edition). (Edited by Charles Harrison and Paul Wood). Blackwell Publishing: USA 2003, p67

<sup>117</sup> Koss, Juliet. 'The Limits of Empathy.' *The Art Bulletin*. Vol. 88, Issue 1. New York: March 2006, p139

<sup>118</sup> Ibid. p139

<sup>119</sup> Ibid. p139

destabilization of identity along the viewer's perceptual borders – a sensation at once physical, psychological, and emotional.”<sup>120</sup> In her analysis of Worringer's dissertation 'Abstraction and Empathy,' Koss crucially posits that both abstraction and empathy necessitate “an experience of self-estrangement”<sup>121</sup> and “exist ... at opposite extremes along an existential continuum of emotional discomfort.”<sup>122</sup> Empathy, in this instance, is associated with naturalism, portraiture, landscape or still-life painting. It is a passive form of contemplation.

I wish to argue that, although the urge to abstraction is a form of self-alienation from the external world, rather than there being an “antithetic relation”<sup>123</sup> between empathy and abstraction, Reductive Abstraction can be imbued with a kind of “active experience of embodied spatial perception”<sup>124</sup> that stands as a paradox in light of the previously mentioned *conflicted gaze*. The conflicted gaze conflates both abstraction and empathy into an active perceptual experience – albeit one with a feeling of self-alienation – through the perceiver's interaction with a singular object in a self-relational and bodily way. This can be juxtaposed to the passive loss of self experienced, for example, in a theatre setting.

*Notwithstanding Then* stands as a figure alone in a selected space within the gallery and, similar to *All That I am*, occupies its given space as a figure-in-waiting to be perceived. In painting, the term *figure* is used to depict an object in illusionistic space but, in this instance, I use it to describe a situation in which the object has left its illusionistic space and entered into that of the real. As such, both *Notwithstanding Then* and *All that I am* are encountered in a relational way. Due to the scale and form of *Notwithstanding Then*, it is possible for the perceiver to be actively caught in self-objectification through their own bodily engagement.

---

<sup>120</sup> Ibid. p139

<sup>121</sup> Ibid. p148

<sup>122</sup> Ibid. p148

<sup>123</sup> Ibid., Worringer. p66

<sup>124</sup> Ibid., Koss. p152

The title *Notwithstanding Then* alludes to the art object as something that exists as an aesthetic event in the *present* moment, despite what has been before (historically) or, conversely, what is about to occur.

## 2.11 Overview

*OMG* was the fourth of a group of earlier works in this project that are composed of multiple parts. In this instance, the parts correspond with each other and to the space of the gallery in a site-referenced manner. All of the works after this work – completed in May 2009 – are single objects. This represents a shift in thinking in regards to the focus of my research. It is difficult to analyse why this shift occurred. *OMG* is, essentially a gallery full of abstract objects which relate to one another and the site-space of installation. As an installation, it is viewed by the perceiver as a whole in a perceptually temporal way. The body of the perceiver forms a relationship with the spaces between the corresponding objects and, by extension, stands in relation to the space in which the objects are contained. It is interesting to note that El Lissitzky made possibly the first site-space – *Proun Room*, 1923 – which he called a “room-space,”<sup>125</sup> or site specifically for living in. This space, Lissitzky claims, is not a living-room<sup>126</sup> but “an exhibition show-room...a demonstration room.”<sup>127</sup> In doing so, Lissitzky deliberately defies painters and marks his demonstration room as a site for institutional dialogue and critique. In both instances, the site-space belongs politically and socially to the gallery institution.

The shift in my research from installations such as *OMG*, as a kind of lived-in experience approach to the work, to the nature of being of a singular object can be seen to place the focus on the art object itself.

The nature of the object and its materiality is the critical focus of this research. In regards to *OMG*, there is also an interest in the object's redefinition in terms of place<sup>128</sup> and the negotiation of the perceiver. In

---

<sup>125</sup> Lissitzky-Kuppers, Sophie. *El Lissitzky: Life · Letters · Texts*. Thames and Hudson: London 1968, p361

<sup>126</sup> *Ibid.*, p361

<sup>127</sup> *Ibid.*, p361

<sup>128</sup> *Ibid.*, p270

order to perceive an object in this way, the viewer must respond to its prompt to “explore the perceptual consequences of a particular intervention in a given site.”<sup>129</sup> In the single object works that followed *OMG* there was the intention of drawing attention to colour and its affective properties. The Neoconcretists utilized colour as the emphasis of their research to achieve “a synthesis of sensorial and mental experiences.”<sup>130</sup> This research has been contextualized with the Neoconcretists as a starting point. Apart from the Neoconcretists' political motivation, my work shares aims for an aesthetic sensibility that is philosophically driven by humanism. Nevertheless, I reference and discuss Minimalism at length as a counterpoint in order to articulate the character of the work in this research.

The affective object is an expressive object that remains reductive through the use of simple geometric forms. Robert Morris raises an objection “against the use of colour that emphasizes the optical and in so doing subverts the physical.”<sup>131</sup> Morris claims that it is this “essentially optical, immaterial, non-containable, non-tactile nature of colour that is inconsistent with the physical nature of sculpture.”<sup>132</sup> Morris' argument demonstrates the importance of a paradox in the work such as *Cosmic Solver Red 1278* in relation to the implicit categorization of sculpture as tactile and painting as visual. Donald Judd, in his decisive article ‘Specific Objects’ 1965<sup>133</sup> claims that the new works or specific objects were closer to painting than sculpture yet the main thrust of his reductive art was the dissolution of the illusionism and delimitation of painting by announcing that real space and actual space are “intrinsically more powerful and specific than

---

<sup>129</sup> Foster, Hal. ‘The Crux of Minimalism’ cited in Meyer, James. *Minimalism*. Phaidon Press Ltd.: London 2000, p270

<sup>130</sup> Gullar, Ferreira. ‘Theory of the Non-Object’ cited in ‘Neoconcretism and Minimalism: On Ferreira Gullar’s Theory of the Non-Object’ by Michael Ashbury. *Cosmopolitan Modernisms*(Edited by Kobena Mercer) InIVA and MIT Press: London 2005

<sup>131</sup> Morris, Robert. ‘Notes on Sculpture: Part 1’ cited in *Minimalism* by James Meyer. Phaidon Press Ltd.: London 2000, p217

<sup>132</sup> Ibid., Morris. p217

<sup>133</sup> Judd, Morris. ‘Specific Objects’ cited in *Minimalism* by James Meyer. Phaidon Press Ltd.: London 2000, p207



paint on a flat surface.”<sup>134</sup> It is this ambivalence to paint and the emphasis on industrial raw materials such as copper, aluminium and Plexiglass rather than paint as a carrier of colour spatialization that provoked me to chose Kapoor’s work in the contextual analysis of *Cosmic Solver Red* over Judd’s *Untitled* 1972 (held in the Tate collection, UK) made of copper and red Plexiglass. The wholeness of the object was paramount to Judd, not the expression of the object. Nevertheless, I believe that the Judd works are steeped in sensuousness through their luminosity rendering them tactile whole forms and the effort to erase subjectivity in light of this immediate aesthetic response is impossible. It is important to note that the aims of Neo-Concrete Art and Minimalism were in opposition. The Neo-Concrete artists, as described by the ‘Neo-concrete Manifesto’, sought to explore the “existential, emotional and effective significance” of art “born out of the need to express the complex reality of modern humanity”<sup>135</sup> whilst the group dubbed Minimalists by Richard Wollheim<sup>136</sup> (whether they were agreeable or not) wished to reduce objects to their bare materiality, structure and form in an effort to critique subjectivity in an oppositional way.

In my research, I have striven to argue for the *affective object* as a possible hybrid – an object whose locus is in the visual. The subject of my work is perplexity held within the mental space of the perceiver. This space is not a personal space but rather a universal, impersonal space. Reductive abstraction is not an approach to art that asks the question: “what does it (the work) mean?” It is about how the art work feels. The objects represent sensation. The perceptual qualities of the work incite a kind of conflicted gaze whereby there is a feeling

---

<sup>134</sup> Ibid., Judd. p209

<sup>135</sup> Gullar, Ferreira. ‘Neo-concrete Manifesto’ cited in *Geometric Abstraction: Latin American Art from the Patricia Phelps de Cisneros Collection*. Yve-Alain Bois, Paulo Herkenhoff, Ariel Jimenez, Luis, Mary Schneider Enrique. Yale University Press: New Haven and London 2001, p154

<sup>136</sup> Foster, Hal. ‘The Crux of Minimalism’ cited in Meyer, James. *Minimalism*. Phaidon Press Ltd.: London 2000, p271

of bombardment of colour and a shifting ground which confounds the object-ness of the object.

The objects that I make are all mostly constructed out of wood and MDF, to which several coats of paint have been applied with a roller. The paint is applied layer by layer, with each layer alternated between coat and sandpaper in order to achieve as smooth and matte-quality a surface as possible. The MFD is cut cleanly on a specialized bandsaw which is capable of leaving a clear break between the surface and the edges. This renders the art object as a thing devoid of all marks, tonal nuance and reference to the fact that it is paint that has determined its appearance but simply a forceful act of colour.

What is apparent here is a reconfiguration of the language of Reductive Abstraction as something held within the concept of “moderate formalism.”<sup>137</sup> Nick Zangwill, a philosopher, proposes that moderate formalism is a balancing of the extremes of formalism and anti-formalism. The aesthetic formalist supports the concept that all the features of the art object – its colour, shape, line, materiality and form – are aesthetic characteristics, and therefore not historically predetermined. Conversely, aesthetic anti-formalists assert that “a work only has aesthetic significance in the context of other works in the tradition in which the work is located,”<sup>138</sup> hence concluding that all art works are historically determined. To take a moderate formalist approach to my art practice suggests that the works constructed for this research project “have both formal and nonformal aesthetic properties.”<sup>139</sup>

*All that I am* and *Notwithstanding Then* are the last two works made for this research project. Both of these works introduce the concept of the body in a manner that is abstract and explicit. There is an inherent vertical relationship to the objects in space and, subsequently, an investment in the subject with relation to these objects. My intention

---

<sup>137</sup> Zangwill, Nick. ‘Formalism’ cited at <<http://www.dur.ac.uk/nick.zangwill/index.html>> I read this essay on Nick Zangwill’s web-page.

<sup>138</sup> Ibid.

<sup>139</sup> Zangwill, Nick. *The Metaphysics of Beauty*. Cornwell University Press: New York 2001, p101

was to give these objects a kind of figurative presence in the delineated space of the “room” in which they are contained. Whilst inside this space, the perceiver *sees* multiple versions of the one object by traversing their eyes over and around and through the object whilst in motion. We do not “see” in the form of a graphic balloon radiating out from the eye as Ludwig Wittgenstein has drawn and states “for the field of sight has not a form like this...”<sup>140</sup> as “this is connected to the fact that no part of our experience is also a priori”<sup>141</sup>. Everything we see could also be otherwise.”<sup>142</sup> From a slightly distanced position, a static yet multi-part object can be perceived as a whole yet it is important to think of this whole as being one of many durational *instances* as Bergson states: “matter or mind, reality ...[appears] to us as a perpetual becoming.”<sup>143</sup>

Memory, for me, is operational on two levels within the work of the artists discussed and my own work. Firstly, there is the memory carried within a person of recognizable feelings and things which have a semblance of something known and secondly, memory is engaged in a durational manner as the objects demand negotiation through space and subjective time whereby different perspectives or views of a single stationary object are gathered and added together to form an image of a whole.

Both the disequilibrium of *Notwithstanding Then* and the fragmentation of *All that I am* emphasize the nature of the object in time and space and contribute to the claim that, as forms of Reductive Abstraction, these works are encoded with expressive qualities that work to reconfigure the objective and rational nature of Reductive Abstraction.

---

<sup>140</sup> Wittgenstein, Ludwig. *Major Works: Selected Philosophical Writings*. HarperCollins Publishers: New York 2009, p64 (5.6331 and 5.634)

<sup>141</sup> I understand the “a priori” for Wittgenstein to be knowledge that is linguistically defined prior to experience.

<sup>142</sup> *Ibid.*, p64

<sup>143</sup> Bergson, Henri. ‘Creative Evolution’ cited in *Art in theory 1900-2000: An Anthology of Changing Ideas* (New Edition). (Edited by Charles Harrison & Paul Wood). Blackwell Publishing: USA 2003, p143

## PART 3

### 3.1 CONCLUSION

This research project engages with the construction of art works in the field of Reductive Abstraction. There were nine works completed in the course of this research project. *Swatch Australia* and *Ballistic Voices* are not included in the works for exhibition as previously discussed but are valuable markers for the progress of the research aims. *Delivery*, *Cosmic Solver Red 1278*, *Tilted Constant*, *Interference Field*, *All that I am* and *Notwithstanding Then* are exhibited in the Plimsol Gallery and *OMG* in the Entrepot Gallery as major works for examination. There are several studio experiments and models on display in my studio.

The artists I have chosen to discuss in this exegesis are very few amongst a multitude of possibilities. For example, there are many artists who display a dynamism through the use of form and colour such as Carlos Cruz-Diez, Jesús Rafael Soto (in particular his later *Penetrables*) and Carmen Herrera. Lygia Clark was one of the main exponents of Neo-concrete art particularly known for her explorations with audience manipulation of her *Bichos* series of forms. Lucio Fontana's critical slashing of the painting canvas to denote real space is also of contextual significance. Contemporary artists such as Tilman, Daniel Argyle, Gemma Smith and Billy Gruner within the groups SNO (Sydney Non-Objective), CCNOA (Center for Contemporary Non-Objective art in Brussels) and Minus Space in New York are active in the development and similar pursuit of progressing Reductive Art and during the course of this research I received emails about their respective activities and exhibitions.

I claim that this work – in a contemporary context – reconfigures the language of Reductive Abstraction primarily through sensation and the affective object. Reductive Abstraction comes out of a formalist tradition of art – in particular, the geometric abstractionist and Minimalist movements of Modernism – and yet has contributed irrevocably in a nonformal and conceptual way. I believe Modernism to be a progressive, unfolding project, open to shifting concepts and never-ending possibilities. It is possible to analyse art today as purely

formal (aesthetically) – even belly-button fluff is either repulsive or a delight – but, in the last 50 years, the critique of aesthetic experience has been largely dominated by anti-aesthetic formalism. The *idea* has consequently held primacy, acting in part paradoxically as a carry-over from the formalist reductive legacy of the 1960's. As Ursula Meyer claims:

There is no rigidity which is associated with objecthood. The object is de-objectified ... the subject – the perceiver – is less alienated from the understated object ... in ceasing to be an object, art has become idea.<sup>144</sup>

Within my work, there is an *affective* objecthood which is a paradox as – despite confounding the objectness of the object – the abstract object is re-objectified in an emergent way. This is demonstrated most clearly when peering into *Cosmic Solver Red 1278* and the impact of the orangening of *Titled Constant*. The colour, as the property of the object, becomes the event of the object. It is re-objectified in the revelation of the particularities of the object in the conflicted gaze. In this way, the subject (the perceiver) loses self-consciousness and is able to empathize with the object. The affective object calls attention to itself through the use of colour sensation and the corresponding relationships between perceiver, object and the gallery space that they occupy.

It is not my intention to subvert the language of Reductive Abstraction. It is more constructive to think of my work as work being encoded with something beyond the object-in-itself which reconfigures the language of Reductive Abstraction. The encoding is an expression of sensation. The Deleuzian vibration of sensation corresponds with the perceiver as “an element of ideation, since it conveys to the mind the perceptual image of the external object; and on the other hand, it is the element of feeling, since through the perception of bodily changes it gives us the character of an *affect*.”<sup>145</sup> There is also reference being made to historical models of representation. The work of this research project is an expression of a way of being through the act and event of reduction: it is one of perplexity. It is deliberately abstract, virtual

---

<sup>144</sup> Ibid., Meyer, p245

<sup>145</sup> Jung, C.G. *Psychological Types*. Routledge & Kegan Paul Ltd.: London 1923, p462

(actual objects yet objects of the imagination) and affective – not emotive but, rather, affective as in something closer to intensity.<sup>146</sup> Brian Massumi describes *intensity* as “incipience, incipient action and expression.”<sup>147</sup> It is a sentiment closely associated with sensibility.<sup>148</sup> The juxtaposition between Reductive Abstraction and the subjective outcome of the work creates conflict and, in so doing, brings to attention the conflicted self. The perceiver is confronted with a heightened sense of awareness to the point of self-conflict because of the deceptive conditions of the work, which are open to many possibilities.

To have a subjective experience in art is to imply that art objects are capable of some form of expression. Richard Wollheim, in his “physical-object hypothesis,”<sup>149</sup> theorizes two kinds of expression. Firstly, the expression or “secretion of an inner state”<sup>150</sup> – referred to as “natural expression”<sup>151</sup> – and, secondly, the capability of an object to express “a certain condition... [which] we experience inwardly.”<sup>152</sup> Wollheim calls this second form “correspondence.”<sup>153</sup> He attributes natural expression to the feelings of the artist and that of correspondence to the perceiver. The affective objects of this research have the quality of correspondence and reach the result of natural expression “through a chain of totally subjective reactions.”<sup>154</sup>

---

<sup>146</sup> Massumi, Brian. ‘The Autonomy of Affect’ cited in *Deleuze: A Critical Reader*. (Edited by Paul Patton). Blackwell Publishers: UK 1996, p221

<sup>147</sup> Ibid., p224

<sup>148</sup> Crawford, Donald W. ‘Kant’ cited in *Aesthetics: A Comprehensive Anthology* (Edited by Steven M. Cahn and Aaron Meskin). Blackwell Publishing: UK 2008, p56 “Sensibility is the passive ability to be affected by things by receiving sensations, but this is not yet at the level of thought or even experience in any meaningful sense. Understanding, on the other hand, is non-sensible; it is discursive and works with general concepts, not individual intuitions; it is the active faculty of producing thoughts.”

<sup>149</sup> Wollheim, Richard. ‘Art and Its Objects’ cited in *Aesthetics: A Comprehensive Anthology* (Edited by Steven M. Cahn and Aaron Meskin). Blackwell Publishing: UK 2008, p473

<sup>150</sup> Ibid., p472

<sup>151</sup> Ibid., p472

<sup>152</sup> Ibid., p472

<sup>153</sup> Ibid., p472

<sup>154</sup> Duchamp, Marcel. ‘The Creative Act’ (1957).  
<http://www.iaaa.nl/cursusAA&AI/duchamp.html>

### 3.2 What next?

Rather than pursuing the concept of abstract figuration as manifested in works such as *All that I am* and *Notwithstanding Then*, my aim is to construct multiple modules which can be configured in manifold ways to create different compositions. This will enable me to explore colour compositions beyond the monochrome. I will always use the monochrome as a variable when constructing objects in my art practice as a way of feeling colour in its purest sense. It interests me that, although limitless combinations exist, it is possible to usurp the limits of Reductive Abstraction through chance. In combination with many coloured modules of a repeated form, for example, it is possible to pursue the notion of pitch. Pitch is the subjective experience of the frequency (rate of vibration per second) of sound and colour. One colour or sound alongside another can alter the pitch of one or even both. I envisage fields of compositions which are composed by chance, just as – in a strange way – it is necessary to conclude that all the works I make, including the objects of this research project, come about by chance imaginings.

## APPENDICES

### 1. Works Cited

**Adorno, Theodor.** 'Aesthetic Theory' cited in *Aesthetics: A Comprehensive Anthology* (Edited by Steven M.Cahn and Aaron Meskin ). Blackwell Publishing: UK 2008

**Amor, Monica.** 'From Work to Frame, In Between, and Beyond: Lygia Clark and Hélio Oiticica, 1959-1964.' *Grey Room*, Winter 2010. Accessed at <<http://www.mitpressjournals.org/toc/grey/-/38>>

**Arnheim, Rudolf.** *Art and Visual Perception: A Psychology of the Creative Eye* (New Edition). University of California Press: Berkley and Los Angeles 1974

**Batchelor, David.** 'Abstraction, Modernism, Representation' cited in *Thinking Art: Beyond Traditional Aesthetics* (Edited by Andrew Benjamin and Peter Osborne). Institute of Contemporary Arts: London 1991

**Batchelor, David** (Editor). *Colour: Documents of Contemporary Art*. Whitechapel and MIT Press: London and USA 2008

**Benjamin, Andrew.** 'The Activity of Space' cited in *Art & Design Magazine Profile No.55*. Academy Group Ltd.: London 1997

**Bergson, Henri.** 'Creative Evolution' cited in *Art in theory 1900-2000: An Anthology of Changing Ideas* (New Edition) (Edited by Charles Harrison & Paul Wood). Blackwell Publishing, USA 2003.

**Bucke, Richard Maurice.** *Cosmic Consciousness: A Study in the Evolution of the Human Mind*. (Originally published in 1901). Applewood Books: USA 2000

**Colpitt, Frances.** *Minimal Art: The Critical Perspective*. UMI Research Press: USA 1990.

**Crawford, Donald. W.** 'Kant' cited in *Aesthetics: A Comprehensive Anthology* (Edited by Steven M.Cahn and Aaron Meskin ). Blackwell Publishing: UK 2008

**Cripps, Peter.** 'Real Objects in the World' (First published September 1994) cited in the catalogue *Peter Cripps: Towards an Elegant Solution* 8 June – 25 July 2010 Australian Centre for Contemporary Art 2010

**Danto, Arthur C.** 'Embodied Meanings as Aesthetical Ideas'. *Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism*, Winter 2007. Accessed at <[http://www.sztaki.hu/providers/eper/articles/embodied\\_meanings.html](http://www.sztaki.hu/providers/eper/articles/embodied_meanings.html)>

**Delueze, G.** *Francis Bacon: the logic of sensation*. Continuum: London and New York 2003

**Docherty, Thomas.** 'The Aesthetic Event' cited in *Random Access 2: Ambient Fears* (Edited by Pavel Buchler and Nikos Papastergiadis). Rivers Oram Press: London 1996

**Duchamp, Marcel.** 'The Creative Act' (1957). <<http://www.iaaa.nl/cursusAA&AI/duchamp.html>>

**Elderfield, John.** 'Grids' cited in *Artforum*. May 1972.

**Farrow, Clare**(Editor). *A Reinhardt, J Kosuth, F Gonzalez-Torres: Symptoms of Interference, Conditions of Possibility*. Art & Design Profile No 34. Academy Group Ltd.: UK 1994



- Foster, Hal.** 'The Crux of Minimalism' cited in *Minimalism* (Edited by James Meyer). Phaidon Press Ltd.: London 2000
- Fried, Michael.** 'Art and Objecthood' cited in *Minimal Art: A Critical Anthology*. (Edited by Gregory Battcock). Studio Vista Ltd.: Great Britain 1969
- Fry, Roger.** 'Essay in Aesthetics' cited in *Art in Theory 1900-2000: An Anthology of Changing Ideas* (New Edition) (Edited by Charles Harrison and Paul Wood). Blackwell Publishing, USA 2003.
- Golding, William.** *Free Fall*. Penguin Books: UK 1959
- Gallagher, Ann.** *Helio Oiticica: The Body of Colour Exhibition Guide*. Tate Modern 2007. Accessed at <<http://www.tate.org.uk/modern/exhibitions/heliooiticica/guide.sht>>
- Greenberg, Clement.** 'Recentness of Sculpture' cited in *Minimal Art: A Critical Anthology* (Edited by Gregory Battcock). Studio Vista: USA 1968
- Gullar, Ferreira.** 'Theory of the Non-Object' cited in 'Neoconcretism and Minimalism: On Ferreira Gullar's Theory of the Non-Object' by Michael Ashbury. *Cosmopolitan Modernisms* (Edited by Kobena Mercer) InIVA and MIT Press: London 2005
- Gullar, Ferreira.** 'Neo-concrete Manifesto' cited in *Geometric Abstraction: Latin American Art from the Patricia Phelps de Cisneros Collection*. Yve-Alain Bois, Paulo Herkenhoff, Ariel Jimenez, Luis, Mary Schneider Enrique. Yale University Press: New Haven and London 2001
- Hileman, Kirsten.** *Anne Truitt: Perception and Reflection*. GILES in association with the Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden, Smithsonian Institution. UK and Washington: DC 2009
- Huxley, Aldous.** *The Doors of Perception*. Chatto & Windus: London 1954
- Huxley, Aldous.** 'A Case for PSI'. *Life*. Time Inc. New York 1954
- Humphrey, Nicholas.** *Seeing Red: a study in consciousness*. The President and Fellows of Harvard College: USA 2006
- Judd, Donald.** 'Specific Objects' cited in *Art in Theory 1900-2000: An Anthology of Changing Ideas* (New Edition) (Edited by Charles Harrison and Paul Wood). Blackwell Publishing, USA 2003.
- Jung, C.G.** *Psychological Types*. Routledge & Kegan Paul Ltd.: London 1923
- Kant, Immanuel.** 'Critique of Judgement' cited in *Aesthetics: A Comprehensive Anthology*. (Edited by Steven M. Cahn and Aaron Meskin). Blackwell Publishing: UK 2008
- Kemp, Gary.** 'The Aesthetic Attitude' cited in *British Journal of Aesthetics*, Vol.39 No. 4, October 1999
- Kennedy, Michael.** *The Oxford Dictionary of Music*. Oxford University Press: Oxford and New York 1985
- Klein, Yves.** *Yves Klein*. The National Museum of Contemporary Art, Norway Series no 2 1997
- Koss, Juliet.** 'The Limits of Empathy.' *The Art Bulletin*. Vol. 88, Issue 1. New York: March 2006. Accessed at <<http://www.jstor.org/stable/25067229>>
- Krauss, Rosalind E.** *Perpetual Inventory*. An October Book. The MIT Press: London and USA 2010

- Krauss, Rosalind E.** *The Originality of the Avant-Garde and Other Modernist Myths*. MIT Press: USA and London 1985
- Krauss, Rosalind E.** 'The Originality of the Avant-Garde: A Postmodernist Repetition' cited in *October*, Vol.18 (Autumn 1981). The MIT Press
- Kuspit, Donald.** 'The Abstract Self-Object' cited in *Abstract Art in the Late Twentieth Century*. (Edited by Frances Colpitt). Cambridge University Press: UK 2002
- Malevich, Kasimir.** Cited in *Reflection on Color* by Cruz Diez. Fundacion Juan March. Madrid 2009
- Langer, Susanne.** 'Feeling and Form' cited in *Aesthetics: A Comprehensive Anthology*. (Edited by Steven M. Cahn and Aaron Meskin). Blackwell Publishing: UK 2008
- Lissitzky-Kuppers, Sophie.** *El Lissitzky: Life · Letters · Texts*. Thames and Hudson: London 1968.
- Massumi, Brian.** 'The Autonomy of Affect' cited in *Deleuze: A Critical Reader*. (Edited by Paul Patton). Blackwell Publishers: UK 1996.
- McEvilley, Thomas.** *Sculpture in the Age of Doubt*. Allworth Press: New York 1999. p221
- Melville, Stephen.** 'Colour has yet to be named" (1993) cited in *Colour: Documents of Contemporary Art*. (Edited by David Batchelor). Whitechapel and MIT Press: London and USA 2008
- Morris, Robert.** *Continuous Project Altered Daily: The Writings of Robert Morris*. An October Book. MIT Press: Cambridge, Massachusetts 1993
- Morris, Robert.** 'Notes on Sculpture: Part 1' cited in *Minimalism*. (James Meyer). Phaidon Press Ltd.: London 2000
- Pedrosa, Mário** (Annotated translation by Michael Asbury 2004). 'Environment Art, Postmodern Art: Helio Oiticica' cited in *Open Systems: Rethinking Art c1970*. 1 June – 18 September 2005. Tate Publishing: London 2005
- Poddar, Sandhini.** 'Suspending Disbelief: Anish Kapoor's Mental Sculpture' cited in *Anish Kapoor: Memory* (published on the occasion of the exhibition). The Solomon R. Guggenheim Foundation: New York 2008
- Robin, Harry.** *The Scientific Image from Cave to Computer*, Harry N. Abrams Incorporated: New York 1992
- Scholes, Percy A.** *The Oxford Companion to Music*. (Tenth Edition). Oxford University Press. London 1980
- Shiff, R., Storr, R., Danto, A.C., Princenthal, N.** *Robert Mangold*. Phaidon Press Limited: New York 2000
- Varndoe, Kirk.** *Pictures of Nothing*. Princeton University Press: Washington 2006
- Wittgenstein, Ludwig.** *Major Works: Selected Philosophical Writings*. HarperCollins Publishers: New York 2009
- Wollheim, Richard.** 'Art and Its Objects' cited in *Aesthetics: A Comprehensive Anthology*. (Edited by Steven M. Cahn and Aaron Meskin). Blackwell Publishing: UK 2008

**Worringer, Wilhelm.** 'Abstraction and Empathy' cited in *Art in Theory 1900-2000: An Anthology of Changing Ideas* (New Edition). (Edited by Charles Harrison and Paul Wood). Blackwell Publishing: USA 2003

**Zangwill, Nick.** 'Formalism' cited at  
<<http://www.dur.ac.uk/nick.zangwill/index.html>>

**Zangwill, Nick.** *The Metaphysics of Beauty*. Cornwell University Press: New York 2001

## 2. Other References of Interest

**Albers, Josef.** *Interaction of Color* (Revised and Expanded Edition). Yale University Press: New Haven and London 2006

**Arnold, Dana and Iversen, Margaret (Editors).** *Art and Thought*. Blackwell Publishing Ltd.: UK 2003

**Atkins, Terry, Bois, Yves-Alain, Grosz, Elizabeth Anne** (Essayists). *Cadences: Icon and Abstraction in Context*. New Museum of Contemporary Art: New York 1991

**Batchelor, David.** *Chromophobia*. Reaktion: London 2000

**Battock, Gregory** (Editor). *Minimal Art: A Critical Anthology*. Studio Vista Ltd.: Great Britain 1969

**Benjamin, Andrew.** *Object . Painting*. Academy Editions: Great Britain 1994

**Benjamin, Andrew.** *What is Abstraction?* Academy Editions: Great Britain 1996

**Bishop, Claire.** *Installation Art: A Critical History*. Tate Publishing: London 2005

**Bois, Yves-Alain and Krauss, Rosalind E.** *Formless: A Users Guide*. Zone Books: New York 1997

**Bois, Yves-Alain, et al.,** *Geometric Abstraction: Latin American Art from the Patricia Phelps de Cisneros Collection*. Yale University Press: New Haven and London 2001

**Blinderman, Barry** (Curator). *Post-hypnotic*. University Galleries Illinois State University, Normal, Illinois. January 12 – February 21 1999

**Brett, Guy.** 'Elasticity of Exhibition' cited in *Tate Online Research Journal* Issue 12 2009. Accessed at <[www.tate.org.uk/research/tateresearch/tatepapers](http://www.tate.org.uk/research/tateresearch/tatepapers)>

**Bruggen, Coosje Van.** *John Baldessari*. Rizzoli International Publications Ins.:USA 1990

**Bullock, Alan et al.** (Editors). *The Fontana Dictionary of Modern Thought* (Second Edition). Fontana Press: London 1988

**Buskirk, Martha.** *The Contingent Object of Contemporary Art*. The MIT Press: London 2005

- Cahn, Steven M. and Meskin, Aaron** (Editors). *Aesthetics: A Comprehensive Anthology*. Blackwell Publishing: UK 2008
- Certeau, Michel de**. 'Practices of Space' cited in *On Signs* (Edited by Marshall Blonsky). John Hopkins University Press: USA 1985
- Clark, Lygia**. 'Nostalgia of the Body' cited in *October 69 Summer 1994*. MIT Press: London 1994
- Coles, Alex and Bentley, Richard** (Editors). *de-, dis-, ex-. Volume One: Excavating Modernism*. BACKless Books: UK 1996
- Colpitt, Frances**. *Abstract Art in the Late Twentieth Century*. Cambridge University Press: UK 2002
- Danto, Arthur C**. 'Description and the Phenomenology of Perception' cited in *Visual Theory* (Edited by Norman Bryson et al.) Polity Press: UK 1991
- De Oliveira, Nicolas, Oxley, Nicola and Petry, Michael**. *Installation Art*. Texts by Michael Archer, Thames and Hudson: London 1994
- De Salvo, Donna** (Editor). *Open Systems: Rethinking Art c1970*. 1 June – 18 September 2005. Tate Publishing: London 2005
- Dezeuze, Anna**. 'Minimalism and Neoconcretism' March 2006. Accessed at <[http://www.henrymoore.org/docs/anna\\_dezeuze\\_minimalism\\_neoconcretism\\_0.pdf](http://www.henrymoore.org/docs/anna_dezeuze_minimalism_neoconcretism_0.pdf)>
- Eagleton, Terry**. 'Brecht and Rhetoric' cited in *New Literary History, Vol. 16 No. 3 Spring 1985*. The John Hopkins University Press: accessed at <<http://www.jstor.org/stable/468845>>
- Frascina, Francis and Harrison, Charles** (Editors). *Modern Art and Modernism: A Critical Anthology*. Harper and Row Publishers, London 1982
- Gage, John**. *Colour in Art*. Thames and Hudson World of Art: UK 2006
- Gaut, Berys and Lopes, D.M.** (Editors). *The Routledge Companion to Aesthetics (2<sup>nd</sup> Edition)*. Routledge: USA 2005
- Geczy, Adam & Genocchio, Benjamin** (Editors). *What is Installation? An Anthology of writings on Australian Installation Art*. Power Publications: NSW Australia 2006
- Godfrey, Tony**. *Conceptual Art*. Phaidon Press Limited: London 1998
- Goodman, Nelson**. *Ways of Worldmaking*. Hackett Publishing Company: USA 1978
- Greenberg, Clement**. *Art and Culture: Critical Essays*. Beacon Press: Boston 1961
- Gregory, Richard L.** (Editor). *The Oxford Companion to the Mind*. Oxford University Press: New York 1987
- Grombrich, E.H.** *Art & Illusion: A Study in the Psychology of Pictorial Representation*. Phaidon Press Ltd. (5th edition): London 1977

- Gussins, G. & Carpenter, E.** (Editors). *Nothing*. August & Northern Gallery for Contemporary Art: London 2001
- Harrison, Charles & Wood, Paul** (Editors). *Art in Theory 1900-2000: An Anthology of Changing Ideas (New Edition)*. Blackwell Publishing: USA 2003
- James, William.** 'The Varieties of Religious Experience 1900-1902.'  
<<http://www.giffordlectures.org/>>
- Kachur, Lewis.** *Displaying the Marvellous*. MIT Press: London 2001
- Krauss, Rosalind E.** *Passages in Modern Sculpture*. The Viking Press: Canada 1977
- Krauss, Rosalind E.** *The Optical Unconscious*. An October Book. The MIT Press: USA and London 1993
- Kuspit, Donald.** *Signs and psyche in modern and postmodern art*. Cambridge University Press: Cambridge 1993.
- Kuspit, Donald.** *Redeeming Art: Critical Reveries*. Allworth Press: New York 2000
- Lawlor, Leonard and Moulard, Valentine.** 'Henri Bergson' (Revised 2010) cited in *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* accessed at  
<<http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/bergson/>>
- Mannani, Laurent, Nekes, Werner, and Warner, Marina.** *Eyes, Lies and Illusions*. Hayward Gallery Publishing: London 2004
- Massumi, Brian.** 'Too-Blue: Colour-patch for an expanded empiricism' cited in *Parables for the Virtual: Movement, Affect, Sensation*. Duke University Press: Durham and London 2002
- Maund, Barry.** 'The Philosophy of Colour' *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* 2006. Accessed at <<http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/color/>>
- Melville, Stephen** (editor). *The Lure of the Object*. Sterling & Francine Clark Art Institute: USA 2005
- Meyer, James.** *Minimalism*. Phaidon Press Ltd.: London 2000
- Meyer, James.** *Minimal Art and Polemics in the Sixties*. Yale University Press, New Haven and London 2001
- Noe, Alva.** *Action in Perception*. The MIT Press: Cambridge and London 2004
- O'Doherty, Brian.** *Inside the White Cube: The Ideology of the Gallery Space*. University of California Press: California 1976, 1981, 1986.
- Osbourne, Harold** (Editor). *Aesthetics*. Oxford University Press: London 1972
- O'Sullivan, Simon.** *Art Encounters/Deleuze and Guattari*. Palgrave MacMillan: New York 2006
- Patton, Paul** (Editor). *Deleuze: A Critical Reader*. Blackwell Publishers: UK and USA 1996

- Pincus-Witten, R.**, *Postminimalism into Maximalism*. UMI Research Press: Michigan 1987
- Pinto, Regina C.** 'Visual Poetry Movements in Rio de Janeiro' (2006) accessed at <[http://arteonline.arq.br/museu/library\\_pdf/brazilian\\_poetry.pdf](http://arteonline.arq.br/museu/library_pdf/brazilian_poetry.pdf)>
- Poddar, Sandhini and Spivak, Gayatri Chakravorty.** *Anish Kapoor: Memory* (published on the occasion of the exhibition). The Solomon R. Guggenheim Foundation: New York 2008
- Reiss, Julie H.** *From Margin to Center: The Spaces of Installation Art*. MIT Press: Massachusetts 1999
- Riley II, Charles A.** *Color Codes*. University of New England: London 1995
- Rosen, Gideon.** 'Abstract Objects' (2001) cited in *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* accessed at <<http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/abstract-objects/>>
- Rothko, Mark.** *The Artists Reality: Philosophies of Art*. Yale University Press: New Haven and London 2004
- Sacks, Oliver.** *Musicophilia: Tales of Music and the Brain*. Picador: Great Britain 2007
- Seitz, William C.** *The Responsive Eye*. The Museum of Modern Art: New York 1965
- Smithson, Robert and Flam, Jack.** *Robert Smithson: The Collected Writings*. University of California Press: USA 1996
- Stein, Susan Alyson.** 'Kandinsky and Abstract Stage Composition: Practice and Theory, 1909-12' cited in *Art Journal* Vol. 43 No.1 (Spring 1983). College Art Association: accessed at <<http://www.jstor.org/stable/776634>>
- Steinberg, Leo.** 'The Flatbed Picture Plane' accessed at <<http://homepage.mac.com/allanmcnyc/textpdfs/othercriteria.pdf>>
- Sylvester, David.** *About Modern Art: Critical Essays 1948-96*. Chatto and Windus: London 1996
- Temkin, Ann.** *Color Chart: Reinventing Color, 1950 to Today*. The Museum of Modern Art: New York 2008
- Templon, Daniel.** *Special Ellsworth Kelly*. Artstudio Magazine 24: Paris 1992
- Truitt, Anne.** *Daybook: The Journey of an Artist*. Penguin Books: New York 1982
- Tye, Michael.** 'Qualia' (2003) cited in *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* accessed at <<http://setis.library.usyd.edu.au/stanford/entries/qualia/>>
- Virilio, Paul.** *Art as Far as the Eye Can See*. (English Translation by Julie Rose) Berg Publishers: New York 2007
- Warburton, Nigel.** *The Art Question*. Routledge: London and New York 2003

### 3. List of Illustrations

**Figure 1:** Studio (May 2008)

**Figure 2:** *Swatch Australia* 2008, Mixed media installation of variable dimensions

**Figure 3/4/5:** *Delivery* 2008, wood and paint, variable dimensions

**Figure 6:** Crate making instructions to myself to prevent missing a step.

**Figure 7:** Hélio Oiticica *Box Bolide 12* 1964-1965, mixed media assemblage, 400mm x 1400mm x 500mm

**Figure 8:** Daniel Santbech, *Problematum Astronomicorum* (Basel: 1561)

**Figure 9:** *Ballistic Voices* 2009 steel, MDF, paint, rubber. (Installation Long Gallery Hobart)

**Figure 10:** Detail of conical contraption

**Figure 11:** *Ballistic Voices* 2009 steel, MDF, paint, rubber. (Installation SASA Gallery Adelaide)

**Figure 12:** *Ballistic Voices* work in progress 2009

**Figure 13:** Piet Mondrian *Composition with Red, Yellow, Blue and Black* 1921, oil on canvas, 59.5cms x 59.5 cms. (Gemeentemuseum, The Hague)

**Figure 14:** Empty Enrepot Gallery

**Figure 15:** *OMG* 2009, wood, paint, aluminium and vinyl (Installation Enrepot Gallery, Hobart)

**Figure 16:** Hélio Oiticica *Grand Nucleus* 1960 -1966, oil and resin on wood fibreboard. (César and Claudio Oiticica Collection, Rio de Janeiro)

**Figure 17:** Peter Cripps *Another History for H.B. and B.L.* 1991, wooden panels and aluminium. (Installation at ACCA, Melbourne 2010)

**Figure 18:** *Cosmic Solver Red 1278* 2009. Wood and paint. 1400mms x 1000mms x 1000mms

**Figure 19 and 20:** Anish Kapoor *Untitled 1995*. Plaster, acrylic paint and pigment. Diameter 201cms

**Figure 21:** Diagram of ellipse equations.

**Figure 22:** *Tilted Constant* 2009. MDF and acrylic paint. 3000mms x 9mm x 1800mm

**Figure 23:** Richard Serra *Delineator* 1974-76. Two steel plates. Room installation. (Ace Gallery, Los Angeles, California)

**Figure 24:** Studio showing colour mixing

**Figure 25:** *Tune* 2009. Found object and acrylic paint. 342mm x 40mm x 346mm

**Figure 26:** *Interference Field* 2010. MDF and acrylic paint. 80mm x 2700mm x 2700mm

**Figure 27:** Carl Andre *Equivalent VIII* 1966. Fire-bricks. 130mm x 690mm x 229mm

**Figure 28:** Carl Andre *Alcloud* 2007. Aluminium cubes. Dimensions variable. (Galerie Tschudi)

**Figure 29:** Piet Mondrian *Composition with Lines (Composition in Black and White)* 1917. Oil on canvas. 108.4 x 108.4 cms. (State Museum Kröller-Müller, Otterlo)

**Figures 30/31:** *All that I am* in the process of being made.

**Figure 32:** *All that I am* 2010. Fishing Line and paint. 2950mm x 500mm x 500mm

**Figure 33:** Detail of *All that I am*

**Figure 34:** Anne Truitt *View* 1999. Acrylic on wood. 2058mm x 203mm x 203mm. (Collection of the artist)

**Figure 35:** *Notwithstanding Then* (work in progress)

**Figure 36:** *Notwithstanding Then* (detail)

#### **4. Works Exhibited**

**2009 Swatch Australia** shown in *Geometric Nature*: Devonport Regional Art Gallery, Tasmania. Curator: Lucy Hawthorne

**2009 Delivery** shown in *Zero*: Poimena Art Gallery, Launceston. Curator: Paul Snell

**2009 Tilted Constant:** a site-referenced installation at Pigment Gallery, Melbourne

**2009 OMG:** a site-referenced installation at Entrepot Gallery, Hobart

**2009 Ballistic Voices** shown in *Chance Encounters: Ten Days on the Island Festival*, Long Gallery, Hobart, Curators: Maria Kunda and Mary Knights

**2009 Ballistic Voices** shown again in *Chance Encounters*: South Australian School of Art Gallery, Adelaide

**2009 Cosmic Solver Red 1278** shown in the *Hobart City Art Prize*: finalist exhibition at the Tasmanian Museum and Art Gallery

**2010 Interference Field** shown in *Conceptual*: CAST Gallery, Hobart. Curator: Colin Langridge

**2010 All that I am** shown in *Online(fishing)*: Plimsoll Gallery, Hobart. Curator: John Vella